# MUSICIANS AND MUMMERS

HERMAN KLEIN

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# MUSICIANS AND MUMMERS

SIR HERBERT TREE AS BEETHOVEN

*(From a dry-point etching by Adrian Klein.)*

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# MUSICIANS AND MUMMERS

By

HERMAN KLEIN

*Fellow of the Institute of Journalists. Author of "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London"; "The Reign of Patti"; "The Bel Canto," etc.*

*WITH TWELVE HALF-TONE PLATES*

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
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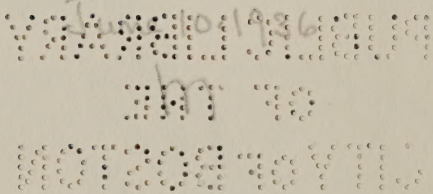

*Printed in Great Britain*

To My Wife

# PREFACE

This book is a personal narrative of events, without being an autobiography in the strict sense of the word. My object in writing it has not been to tell my own life-story, but to describe some of the interesting people I have met and known, many of whom I have never written about before.

On the busy highways of Music and the Drama it is inevitable that the active critic who deigns occasionally to emerge from his shell should come into contact with what are commonly called "celebrities." During my journalistic career of over half a century I must have personally encountered scores of them. Nevertheless I do not limit the characters of this book to celebrities only, with their habitual accompaniment of anecdotes, satirical jokes, and domestic gossip.

I introduce, together with these people, some of the forgotten labourers who stood in the background; barely attaining recognition, much less celebrity, yet, as I can now perceive, doing good work that lived after them, and without which our native art—that of music in particular—would not stand where it does to-day.

Modest pioneers of this type were bound to be numerous and notable during such a momentous epoch as that which

I have looked upon with wide-open eyes, from the staid mid-Victorian simple life of the 'sixties down to the hustle and turmoil of these wonderful nineteen-twenties. Some of their deeds at least ought not to go unrecorded, seeing that they really did play a useful part in the great art-transition which is still actively in progress. The trouble is that actual completion rarely if ever requites efforts of this description, any more than it rewarded the sons of Shem when they built their famous Tower " whose top might reach unto heaven." As a matter of fact, the highways of Art are thickly bordered with unfinished towers, and would now, probably, look rather bare without them.

I have also lightly traced the musical developments of my time, with an occasional glance at events connected with the theatre. It would have been presumptuous to attempt more. To do justice critically to the Music and Drama of the whole period in all their varied aspects would have required several volumes of the size of this.

H. K.

London, *June*, 1925.

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# MUSICIANS AND MUMMERS

## CHAPTER I

### MY NATIVE NORWICH IN THE 'SIXTIES

Introductory—Memories of 1863—Entry of the Prince and Princess of Wales—My Parents—Dr. Augustus Jessopp—The Cathedral Choir—Dr. Zechariah Buck—A Musical City—The Theatre Royal—English Opera and Melodrama—The Triennial Festival—The *Norwich Argus*—Editor and Retired Dancing-master—J. L. Toole Speaks—Michau's Traditions and Recollections—Learning the Minuet.

IN writing this book I have followed the illustrious precedent which was set by Queen Victoria. When Her Majesty, who at certain periods of her wonderful life kept a diary (a thing, by the way, I have never done), conceived the happy idea of publishing her "Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands," she hesitated long before ultimately carrying the idea into effect. But the book was joyously acclaimed by Her Majesty's loyal subjects, and the whole issue quickly bought up. Whereupon the Queen, with characteristic common sense, decided to bring out a volume of "More Leaves," which was duly purchased and read with equal avidity.

In a very humble way my case is similar to Queen Victoria's. My book, "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," was published in 1903* and the original edition was sold out long ago. To complete the analogy, I have felt I ought now to bring out a volume of "More

* New York: The Century Company; London: William Heinemann.

Years," because I want very much to fill in certain lacunæ, certain serious gaps, that unnecessarily disfigured the earlier half of my previous book. " Story, God bless you, I have none to tell ! " Yet I fancy I am going to get nearer to one this time.

The best excuse for my former " sins of omission " is that I did not begin my record sufficiently far back or spread my net quite wide enough. I had just begun life afresh in a land that was new to me, and did most of my writing in a remote spot called Merriewold Park, up in the hills of New York State, where my brother Charles owned a cottage. I was staying near him at the " Inn." There I had access to few of my old papers and records; nor could I then perceive the exact degree of interest that might attach to some of the friends and events of my younger days. But I see better now—now that the memories have grown older and I have been back in the old country some sixteen years.

Moreover, there is to-day a good deal of misconception regarding many of these same people and events, more particularly concerning the men who were making English musical history during the last thirty or forty years of the nineteenth century. I used to fear that they were going to be altogether forgotten; but apparently the danger does not lie there. Their names are remembered, but their work, their vital, splendid pioneer work, is being ignored or misunderstood. Now if, in describing some of these pioneers as I knew them, I can throw a clearer light upon what they achieved, it will afford me uncommon pleasure; and it will also be doing them deserved if tardy justice.

If I occasionally cross the borderland that separates Music from the Drama, I hope I may not cease to interest,

for in my younger days my connexion with the theatre was very close. I knew many celebrated actors and actresses; and, incidentally, before I dovetailed the labours of a dramatic with those of a musical critic, I very nearly became an actor myself !

My boyish love of both arts had started in my native city of Norwich, long before I fell into step with the crowd on the great Musical Highway of the Metropolis. I date it from 1863, when I was seven years old, because I can associate certain memorable occurrences with that year. It was in 1863 that I heard Jenny Lind sing in St. Andrew's Hall ; that I went with our friend Mr. James Harcourt, the chorus-master, to one of the Festival rehearsals and so obtained my first hearing of Tietjens, Trebelli, Sims Reeves, and Santley; that I listened to my first opera—Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, sung in English at the Theatre Royal ; and that I was first allowed to attend my mother's annual ball at the old Royal Hotel, given under the patronage of the Mayor, the officers of the garrison, and half the aristocracy of the county of Norfolk.

It was, moreover, in March, 1863, that I witnessed my first big public spectacle, viz., the entry into Norwich, shortly after their marriage, of the Prince and Princess of Wales (King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra), on their way to their new home at Sandringham. That was, to me, a wonderful experience; for I sat perched upon my Uncle Alfred's shoulder as he stood in the Market-place, and I had a splendid view of the whole scene. I thought it another piece of good fortune that my father, on duty with the Volunteers who lined the streets, should be standing near enough for me to see him "present arms." He looked very smart in his new uniform, and yet I pitied him

when I remembered (because I *knew*) the terrible weight of his rifle.

The Princess was a vision of loveliness. I had never seen so beautiful a face; her radiant smile won all hearts. The Prince, looking supremely happy, bowed graciously as he raised his hat to the dense crowd. His friend and equerry-to-be, Lord Suffield, was riding, as Colonel of the Norfolk Artillery Militia, beside the Royal Carriage, and very proud did I feel when my uncle pointed him out, for he was a pupil of my father's. I little dreamed, though, that Lord Suffield was one day to be a close friend of my own, and to present me to the illustrious Prince and Princess who were now driving past to wind up their honeymoon at Sandringham.

Norwich in the 'sixties was a far more interesting city than it is to-day. Modernity had not then laid "improving" hands upon its quaint architecture, modified its old-fashioned habits and customs, or lowered its independence as a self-reliant, self-governed, self-supporting art-centre. It had a life of its own, apart from agriculture or mere industrialism, defying even the surcharged atmosphere of clericalism that surrounded the glorious old Cathedral. East Anglia was still remote from the capital of the kingdom; express trains still took four or five hours to get from the Thorpe Station to Shoreditch. Motor-cycles, electric trams, automobiles, aeroplanes were as yet unknown; locomotion by road was still restricted to horse or foot or an occasional traction-engine.

Even as a child I could appreciate the beauties of the picturesque old city—the glorious Norman Cathedral; the many quaint churches and interesting monuments; the ancient Castle, then a prison but now a museum; St. Andrew's Hall, with its fane-like nave and aisles and its

portraits of bygone mayors; the broad, sloping Market-place and the narrow, tortuous streets. As I grew older I loved to row on the Yare or swim in the Wensum below Hellesdon Mills; to walk up Castle Hill and look over the valley in the direction of Thorpe; to climb up to Old Crome's beloved Mousehold Heath, and gaze upon the panorama of the city with its tall Cathedral spire standing out in the foreground. I liked watching the cattle on market-day and the country folk coming in on the carriers' carts; or perchance to catch sight of the Cromer coach, looking very spick-and-span in its yellow paint, the last of the four-in-hands to be driven in and out of Norwich by that notorious spendthrift Mr. Windham.

Norwich was fond of music, of the theatre, of its circus and fairs, and it knew how to enjoy life in its own simple, unexciting, country-like way. It was fond, too, of dancing—I mean ballroom or, as it was then often called, "carpet" dancing—as popular a "craze" in the 'sixties as it is in this third decade of the twentieth century. It was in this particular branch of art, or rather in the tuition thereof, that my mother played her part. She not only danced beautifully but was a remarkably good teacher.

Her only professional rival in the city was a grandson of the renowned French dancer Jean Georges Noverre, the reformer of the ballet at the Paris Opéra in the eighteenth century. He instructed a large *clientèle* at "Noverre's Rooms," a building that stood near the theatre. I always recollect it because it was there as a child that I once went upon the platform to measure my height against that of the celebrated dwarf General Tom Thumb; and it was there, later, as a boy of ten, that I appeared at our Opie House school recitations in the part of Orpheus (in the burlesque

of that name) and subdued the Furies, not with a lute, but with a barrel-organ:

> For never was there story of more glee
> Than this of Orpheus and his Eurydice.

But I fancy my mother had the best of Mr. Noverre in the support of the big county families, who drove into Norwich from miles around; not to mention the crowds of good city folk who attended her evening dances, and the fame of her annual ball, for which it was a distinction to obtain tickets. She was a busy *mère de famille*, too; but that did not prevent her from occasionally adding "private theatricals" to the attractions of the house, for she was a capital actress, and our ball-room in St. Simon's was easily fitted up with a proscenium and stage. Her Madame Deschappelles in *The Lady of Lyons* and her Mrs. Hector Sternhold in *Still Waters Run Deep* are among my treasured recollections, especially as tiny parts in each play (a boy in buttons or something of the kind) served for my own stage débuts.

Pushing her eldest son into the foreground at an early age was one of my mother's weaknesses; but it was also useful to her in at least one direction. Before I was nine she had made a good dancer of me, and at most of her juvenile classes she would have me stand by her side to show the various "positions" and *battements* and other steps, so that the children might imitate me. I was delighted to be of use to her, and the idea grew into a habit that was to exercise a peculiar influence upon my future career. In due time I will explain how. Meanwhile a word about my father.

His professional occupation as teacher of languages at the local Grammar Schools of Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, and Thetford did not affect me to the extent that my mother's did. Like her, he was very busy; he

made many friends; he was handsome and always dressed smartly. But, although a good waltzer, he disliked dancing, and preferred of an evening to go off to his Masonic lodge or his Volunteer drill. At the latter he was, I believe, an "efficient"; though at the shooting range he confessed he could never hit a bull's-eye, for which I always held to blame that heavy Martini-Henry rifle.

It was one of my ambitions to join the Cadet Corps, which was wont to drill in the Close in a grey uniform like the one that the Volunteers wore ; but my father declared that I was too young to be thus indulged, even if I were of an age to be accepted. I bore him another grudge: he had given way to my grandparents, who desired that I should attend Mr. Arthur Codling's private school, whereas I was anxious to go to the Grammar School, then under the headmastership of a gentleman and scholar who was destined to become a famous *littérateur*. I refer to the Rev. Dr. Augustus Jessopp.

Dr. Jessopp was an exceedingly tall, dignified man, imposing in speech and manner, generous and kind-hearted in his treatment both of masters and boys. He was, I always understood, extremely just, but so brimful of learning himself that he was apt to expect more from his scholars than was altogether fair. His lectures displayed a marvellous fund of universal information and were hugely appreciated by the upper boys. Personally I did not admire Dr. Jessopp, because I was told that he did not encourage his boys to study music—a fact which helped not a little to reconcile me to my own humbler school at Opie House. There, at any rate, Mr. Codling, who was a member of the Festival Chorus, taught us part-songs, wherein I sang principal treble with great gusto and—may I say?—some distinction.

But my greatest joy was listening to the Cathedral choir. It was only a stone's-throw from St. Simon's to the Close, through the old Erpingham Gate, where, just inside on the left, the Grammar School stood—and still stands. Such voices, such singing I have never heard surpassed—no, not at St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, or even the Temple ! Their delicious tone, of an amazingly pure quality, sounded to my ears doubly beautiful when they were threading the mazes of those grand anthems and services by Byrd and Tallis and the others which figured almost daily in the Cathedral calendar. I envied even as I listened and enjoyed; I felt that I would have given anything to be a choir-boy in the glorious old fane erected by the Norman bishop Herbert de Losinga. But that could never be.

No need, though, for me to wait half a century to recognize the genius of those inspired Elizabethan giants or appreciate the wonderful originality and grandeur of their music. Little as I could understand or even perceive the complexity of their technical mastery, I could at least feel its flow through the smooth, easy stream of those heavenly harmonies. I could certainly value, though still little more than a child, the inestimable privilege of being brought up, as it were, upon musical fare of this exquisite sort.

One summer evening, when walking home with one of the boys after service, my companion pointed out to me an elderly gentleman hurrying through the Close with a roll of music under his arm. " Look, there goes Dr. Buck, our teacher. Awfully severe, I can tell you; boxes our ears hard if we don't do exactly as he wants. But he knows how to make us do the right thing. Did you hear him humming to himself as he passed us ? They say he knows

every note of every part in every service that was ever written ! "

A high reputation, indeed, was that enjoyed by Dr. Zechariah Buck, who had then been organist of the Cathedral for nearly fifty years. But it was not as an organ-player that he was celebrated—a worse executant had probably never held the post, and his deputy, our friend Dr. Edward Bunnett (who was never to have the honour of succeeding him), could have beaten him " hands down." But as a trainer of choir-boys Dr. Buck was literally a wonder—without a rival, I should say, in any cathedral city in the kingdom. He had mastered the secret of giving his pupils an exquisitely clear, pure, unforced tone, wholly free from throatiness or a tendency to sing sharp ; and he made them phrase in the neatest, cleanest fashion, without a shade of sentimentality. To hear his solo boy sing " O for the wings of a dove," in Mendelssohn's " Hear my Prayer," was to my youthful ears like a foretaste of Paradise.

Music of every type was to be heard in the old city. There were the recitals given in St. Andrew's Hall by Dr. Bunnett as the Corporation organist. (He had at that period a wretched instrument to play on, but the first time I heard it, when quite a tiny youngster, he made it sound so imposingly grand to my ears that I was quite overcome. I burst into tears, and had to be led in disgrace from the hall.) Then on Saturday afternoons the regimental band from the cavalry barracks (paid for in those days by the officers and invariably conducted by a German band-master) would play selections in the Close—notably *potpourris* from the latest new operas, such as *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, and *Faust*, the airs of which were just becoming tolerably familiar. These and the older Italian operas,

besides quite a string of English ballad operas, including *The Bohemian Girl*, *Maritana*, *Lurline* and *The Rose of Castile*, I used frequently to hear given at the theatre by an excellent English company that comprised Madame Haigh-Dyer and her husband, Henry Haigh, William Harrison, Herbert Bond, Chas. Durand, Aynsley Cook,* and Oliver Summers.

On the whole these were capital performances—quite good enough to justify the popularity that English opera enjoyed in Norwich. I am not prepared to say that opera exercised a fascination over the citizens wholly equal to that wielded by the circus ; but the two ran each other close. The local concerts, being chiefly of what was then termed the " miscellaneous " order, were not much to boast of. The Festival was, of course, a thing apart.

My parents were ardent and regular theatre-goers. The *beaux restes* of a first-rate provincial stock company still survived at the Theatre Royal, and we were on terms of personal friendship with the lessee, Mr. William Sidney, whose wife was a charming and sympathetic actress. Both came to dine with us occasionally, and then the talk about the stage would help to fan into a flame my growing infatuation for everybody and everything connected with it. I was always acting. I acted at home in my mother's theatricals; I acted in the school recitations; even Mr. Sidney (who in later years became stage manager at the Adelphi Theatre, London) jocularly admitted that I was " cut out for the profession."

The repertory of the Theatre Royal had begun to fall away from its pristine level in so far as regarded the

* The grandfather, on his mother's side, of Eugène Goossens. He was an admirable bass singer and the most picturesque Devilshoof I ever saw.

"legitimate drama." Shakespeare was rarely performed; the old English comedies scarcely ever. Had it not been for the Christmas pantomime, which drew crowded houses for a couple of months, the Sidneys would have been unable to keep their heads above water. Some of the London favourites—the famous comedian J. L. Toole, for instance—did excellent business. There were big audiences for the company headed by a clever actress known as Madame Beatrice. She used to give *Caste* and the other new Robertson pieces, besides English versions of popular French plays, such as Sardou's *Nos Intimes* and Dumas' *Dame aux Camélias*, then all comparative novelties.

These things excepted, our dramatic fare hovered mainly between melodrama and burlesque. Well do I remember Mrs. Sidney in *Ixion, or the Man at the Wheel*, singing and dancing with immense spirit a few minutes after she had made us weep copiously as Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*. Very fine, too, did we think J. F. Young in *The Isle of St. Tropez* and Charles Sennett in *Monte Cristo*.

The old theatre had a quaint, rather squat façade in the formal Greek style, with thick columns that were not lofty enough to be imposing, and surmounted by an insignificant pediment. Through this curious entrance one passed through a small waiting-room direct to the auditorium, where the "dress boxes" on the same level encircled a fairly spacious pit—stalls being as yet unknown. There was the conventional "apron" separating the gas footlights from the old-fashioned painted canvas curtain, which went up and down on a huge roller with sundry jerks that often threatened disaster. For a Theatre Royal it was, I now know, an extremely primitive-looking, uncomfortable place; everything was on a small scale except

the playbill, which was nearly a yard long and cost exactly one penny. In my juvenile estimation, however, Melpomene never had a lovelier temple. The question of size troubled me no more than the draughts or the smell of oranges. The play was "the thing," and my eyes were kept glued to the stage.

One strange custom puzzled me not a little. I used to notice that people possessing what were called "silver tickets" were allowed into the boxes without paying. What virtue is there, I reflected, in a couple of coins the size of half a crown, that they should serve as an "Open Sesame" for two persons to enter a public place like this, without even being given up to the doorkeeper?

Only in course of time did I ascertain that they were proprietary tokens acquired in the past by worthy folk who had invested money in the building and bequeathed them to their families. By legal right, therefore, their owners could never be refused admission. That seemed perfectly fair. But I was not quite so sure about it when I came to learn that these "silver tickets" were to be hired at a cheap figure at certain small shops in the city, the proceeds, less commission, going to the owners. And there were then quite a number of them in existence. Are they still to be had, I wonder?

To-day Norwich is "thrice blessed" with its Maddermarket Theatre and its clever amateur company of Repertory Players, presided over by that talented producer Mr. Nugent Monck. There at least Shakespeare is appreciated at his full value—perhaps revered and enjoyed more than ever.

I cannot pretend that the theatrical history of Norwich, at any rate in the 'sixties, had features of interest comparable

with those which distinguished cities like Bath or Dublin. The leading actors and actresses, with rare exceptions, were not in the habit of coming there. I have heard it said that Charles Dickens conferred universal fame upon Ipswich. What might not have happened if he had crossed over into our county, visited its capital, stayed at the Maid's Head Hotel (before it was rebuilt), and realized how much more quaint and interesting than Ipswich was the city of churches and chapels where I was born? It might even have given birth to a second Pickwick.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that to the "nobility and gentry" of East Anglia the existence of a theatre in Norwich was practically unknown; while naturally to the main body of the local clergy it was strictly taboo. Had not a Bishop of Norwich, some twenty years previously, prevailed upon Jenny Lind to quit for ever the operatic stage, as being necessarily identified with that wicked and immoral place the theatre?

Towards the Triennial Musical Festival the attitude of patrician Norfolk and Norwich was precisely the reverse; and so it was to remain as long as remoteness from the metropolis, absence of competition, and the hereditary love of oratorio were to sustain interest and pride in an institution that reflected credit upon the whole province. Even so, financial success was not left to chance. An admixture of local amateurs reduced the cost of the band, the choral works were well rehearsed, and the finest available artists were engaged to sing the solos.

Prominent members of the committee went about with stacks of Festival tickets in their pockets to sell them to their friends. At least two—Roger Kerrison and E. K. Harvey—made it a practice, during the summer weeks

that preceded the gathering, to drive over half the county and call personally upon the Townshends, the Stradbrokes, the Leicesters, the Walsinghams, the Straceys, the Gurneys, and dozens more of the surrounding families. Nor did they quit these country seats of the mighty until they had secured substantial cheques, supplemented in some cases by a promise to attend the Festival ball which wound up the week.

Little wonder, therefore, that the lines of heavy barouches and landaus, bearing coronets and crests galore, driven by bewigged coachmen and sometimes even by postilions, were wont to stretch from the doors of St. Andrew's Hall to the distant Market-place or Tombland, while plebeian Norwich crowded the streets and stood for hours to gaze open-mouthed upon so much outward and visible magnificence. Hence, too, the importance of fine weather on these historic occasions.

To-day, happily, artistic considerations matter more than the external glitter, the social "pomp and circumstance," of the Festival show. Yet it served its purpose by helping to keep the institution alive, besides making much money for needy charities. To prove which it may be recalled that in the 'seventies, when its social brilliancy became eclipsed, loss replaced profit so seriously that the Festival was nearly abandoned altogether.

Fortunately for my folk, the efforts made by certain well-meaning citizens in the 'sixties to sustain the moral tone of this ancient city offered no hindrance to the pursuit of the polite art of dancing, as practised and taught by my industrious mother. On the contrary, her classes were at all times largely attended. My father was also sufficiently prosperous in his line for me to be wholly unprepared for

a certain event which was to occur before I was much older.

Happily I was too young to be consulted as to my views concerning my own choice of a profession. I had my own idea, of course; but obviously a professional actor in the family would have been nothing less than an outcast. My grandmother (a splendid woman, well known and greatly loved throughout the city) was desirous of having me "articled" to her London lawyer; but as that would be impossible until I was sixteen (though actually I did pass my Preliminary Examination for the Law at the unprecedentedly early age of thirteen, or three years too soon) there was clearly no hurry for the question to be discussed. I mention it now only because it was just at the period I am dealing with that chance threw in my way the two notable men who had most to do with settling the question for me.

Norwich did not give birth to many clever men, excepting perhaps doctors; but undeniably it attracted them. The glories of the school of fine painters associated with the name of Old Crome were past and gone. Yet talented men used to leave the metropolis to work or finish their careers in the peaceful old place where I was still a schoolboy; and among them were Frederick Laurence Phillips, the editor of the *Norwich Argus*, and Augustus Hervé Bizet Michau, a retired opera dancer and teacher, who was now some seventy years of age, but looked a good deal younger. It so happened that these men hated each other cordially.

Fred Phillips (who was about sixty when he died in 1879) had resided in the city for some years; his name had previously been familiar to London playgoers as a member of the Adelphi company, at which theatre he was crippled by a fall upon the stage. He was now known in Norwich

as a pungent, abusive writer, editor and part proprietor (with my uncle, Philip Soman) of our lively local weekly, the *Norwich Argus*. He was disliked and feared because his articles were scurrilous ; he spared none but his friends. But he wrote well, brilliantly even, and it was said that beneath his rough Johnsonian exterior there beat a not unkind heart. My grandfather, a staunch Radical, objected strongly to his sarcastic Toryism ; my father was rather inclined to accept his views; I read him with relish because I enjoyed his keen, witty sallies and amusing personalities.

Between them, my uncle and his notorious but gifted editor were unwittingly responsible for my initiation into the " secrets and mysteries " of the hitherto strange profession with which I was in due time to be closely identified —I mean journalism. It came about in a rather curious fashion.

Pugnacious Mr. Phillips only influenced me through his pen, it is true; but I loved the atmosphere of the newspaper office (which he never entered) and determined to make it the means of communication that should enable me to behold the awesome editor at close quarters in his own " den." I had seen him once when he came with his wife to dine with my parents, but had not then dared to address him. (Of that episode I recollect only that he was extremely stout, that he limped badly, and that the moment he clapped his eyes upon the dining table he roared in a loud voice : " Olives, begod ! " and forthwith proceeded to devour every olive within reach.) My plan was a simple one. I knew that on Wednesdays he was in the habit of having his proofs brought to him by a boy, who had to wait for them in his study whilst he corrected them. Why not be that boy ? It fitted in with my half-holiday,

and at the *Argus* office my offer of service was readily accepted.

Never was messenger prouder of his job than I was on the first occasion that I set out (*ætat.* 11), with my packet of proofs, for Mr. Phillips's house in Bethel Street. I recollect even now how my heart beat as I ascended the steep, straight flight of stairs and knocked gently at the door of the study ; how I trembled as I entered on hearing "Come in!" shouted in the well-remembered roar. It was a hot summer afternoon, and the slightly stuffy room, lined with books on all four walls and littered everywhere with papers, contained no furniture save a few chairs and a large flat desk in the centre, at which, facing the door, sat the journalistic deity of the temple. He held out his hand for the proofs, and, without uttering a word or deigning to spare me a glance, pointed to a seat. I gladly subsided, and there I waited without stirring—for the space of a full hour.

But I found ample entertainment in watching the redoubtable personage before me. He was, in the words of Hamlet, "fat and scant of breath." He constantly puffed and blew as he scratched innumerable corrections and additions with a noisy pen (a quill, I fancy) on the margin of each galley-proof. I could see that above the waist-line of his ample trousers he wore only a plain, unstarched shirt, quite loose and open at the neck. His grizzled hair was rough and unkempt ; his face, with its heavy jowl, looked sallow in the bright sunlight ; his piercing grey-blue eyes changed expression oddly as he frowned at some exceptionally bad printer's error or chuckled over one of his own stinging ironical shafts. Somehow he brought to my mind the theatre. I could not help imagining that this was the old actor playing

the rôle of editor, and inventing all his "business" with a veteran's skill. The hour seemed to pass with lightning rapidity. Suddenly he looked at me and spoke :

"Who are you ? What's your name ?" I told him.

"Ah, I thought I had seen you before ; but never here, eh ? Are you working at the office ? No ? I thought not. Half-holiday from school ; hum ! You would be doing better to spend it in the open air. I should have preferred it when I was a boy. You like newspaper work, eh ? Well, as long as you haven't to write for a living, it's all right."

With that he held out the sheaf of corrected proofs and waved his hand as though he were dismissing a stage messenger ; and I departed. The experience had, however, interested me. I repeated it several times, especially after I began a more or less regular attendance at my uncle's office in spare hours, staying in the "composing-room" on the evening before publishing day to help my cousin, Asher Soman, in the (to me) congenial task of proof-reading. Thus did I, for sheer enjoyment and without pecuniary reward, serve my juvenile apprenticeship on the editorial staff of the *Norwich Argus*.

Fred Phillips was a bosom friend of that quaint, delightful comedian, J. L. Toole, who came to Norwich regularly once or twice a year, and knew better than anyone else how to bring the local Diogenes out of his "tub." Then would ensue, night after night, merry suppers after the theatre at the Jenny Lind Restaurant in Davey Place, enriched, so I heard, with wonderful anecdotes and personal reminiscences of the Keans, of Macready, of Phelps and Charles Mathews—the last two then still living. How I longed to be behind those well-drawn curtains listening to it all !

One Sunday, in later years, I lunched with dear genial Johnny Toole (after he had moved from Maida Vale to Knightsbridge), and over our cigars I drew him on to the subject of his former chum, the once-feared Norwich editor, now deceased. Said he :

" Phillips was not at heart a bad sort, but his accident embittered his whole life. He loved the stage, and when he found he would never be able to act again, it changed his character entirely. He became morose, sour-tempered, even cruel. What his poor wife (a good actress, by the way) had to put up with from him, no one ever knew. You say you admired him as a writer ? Yes, he was clever with his pen—perhaps a shade too clever. Anyhow, thank your lucky stars you didn't stick too much to his style ! "

So much for my first editor.

Bizet Michau—son of the celebrated Mme. Michau patronized by George IV—was French by birth, but had lived in England most of his life. Very dark, and by no means handsome, except for his clear brownish-black eyes, which looked you through and through, he was, I think, of Algerian origin on his father's side. He did not look his sixty-odd years, and was still extraordinarily active and agile ; absurdly proud of his small feet, and capable (as I was to learn) of executing with grace and elegance every figure in the *menuet de la cour*, the gavotte, and the Spanish *cachucha*. Like most of the old dancing masters, he played the violin himself whilst teaching, and did both with an amazing degree of elasticity and rhythm.

When Michau came to live in Norwich in 1865 he had already retired from active work, though his daughters, Louise and Isabel Michau, still taught in London. He

soon made my mother's acquaintance and became a regular visitor at our house. At first I did not like him. His manners were abrupt, his voice and speech were inclined to be rough, his opinions strong and not to be moved by argument. He thought—no wonder !—that the editor of the *Argus* was " the most impossible man he had ever met."

But to the " Klein family " he quickly took a great fancy. He made a special fuss of my brother Max, who was something of a violin prodigy ; he was genuinely attached to my mother and grandmother ; and he insisted always on my talking with him a good deal of French, although, like my Alsatian grandfather, he had himself forgotten much of his native tongue. Underneath his obstinate outer husk of harmless egotism, bad temper, and pardonable vanity was concealed a warm disposition, with a capacity for devotion that I was to prove during many years of intimate friendship.

He had a retentive memory and a long string of curious recollections to draw upon. He would quote Shakespeare in a somewhat raucous voice, with all the measured, declamatory elocution of the then fast-fading school of heavy tragedians. His chief boast was that he had known Edmund Kean ; that he had seen him at least half a dozen times in *Richard III ;* " an actor of supreme genius, who made your blood run cold from the instant he first walked on the stage." And then would follow—

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this sun of York,

in a tone which we were assured (doubtless with some truth, for Michau was an excellent imitator) was an exact reproduction of the renowned Edmund's. To me, I am

bound to admit, it had what our exacting editor and critic, Mr. Phillips, would have described as "a vastly stagy flavour." But of course I never dared to say so.

Imitating celebrated actors was a popular accomplishment in those days, and Michau possessed more than enough examples to serve for a profitable music-hall "turn." His favourite was Charles Kean, who was easy—easier than his father, because the former's voice resembled a raven's hoarsest croak. Next best was his mimicry of Samuel Phelps in the scene between Macbeth and the Witches; it was said to be perfect in accent and tone. I had some difficulty, however, in distinguishing clearly when it was Macbeth who was speaking and when the Witches. With their "tuppence-coloured" methods and vindictive intonation they sounded to me equally bloodthirsty and murderous.

Michau spoke with marked admiration of his famous mother. "When she came over from Paris, early in the century, the art of dancing in England, under George III, was being shockingly neglected. However, she persuaded the Prince Regent to set the fashion for a revival, and she herself introduced several new square and round dances, including the *valse-à-deux-temps*. Later on she brought over another new dance, the polka, and had to hire Willis's Rooms (in King Street, St. James's) because the crowds of fashionable people who wanted to learn it could not be accommodated in her ordinary ball-room.

"Her vogue from the first was tremendous. The Prince Regent himself took lessons from her, and, after he had built the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, appointed her directress of the Court balls given there. She did not like having to mix old with modern dances in the same programme, but there was no avoiding it, especially after

the Regent had become King George IV." The main point was that the Brighton balls, for sheer extravagance and brilliancy, eclipsed all the boasted glories of Bath, and knocked the triumphs of Beau Brummel into a cocked hat.

After Madame Michau died *bals masqués* grew by degrees less popular in England, and her son Bizet (whose career as a dancer of *pas seuls* at the Paris Opéra was brief, owing to an accident to his foot) settled down as a teacher in London. Between 1830 and 1860 he witnessed, and to some extent shared in, the most complete evolution of styles that ball-room dancing had ever undergone during a similar period—an evolution nevertheless to be fairly matched by the more recent and uglier one that came about between 1890 and 1920.

"It is chiefly," Michau would say, "because all the beautiful old dances have gone out of fashion that I prefer not to teach any longer. It takes too much time and trouble for people nowadays to learn the minuet or the gavotte. You need thirty lessons to master the *menuet de la cour*" (he was to teach it to me in seventeen lessons, but that is a later story), "whereas you can learn the polka in two and the *valse-à-trois-temps* in half a dozen. And then, when you do know these lively, jigging, round dances, the pleasure that they yield is purely selfish, purely due to physical vibration and rhythm. There is nothing in them for the spectator to enjoy, such as one can find in an elegant fancy-dance of the old school!" I cannot help wondering what he would have said had he lived to see the tango and the fox-trot! He had a rather hasty temper, and was liable to express himself in strong language.

His outbursts, however, quickly subsided, and when we heard him utter his quaint "Let's poke up the fire and laugh," we knew that the storm was over. He had heard

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Paganini play the "Carnival of Venice" on one string; but, he added, "it gave me more pleasure to listen to the heavenly tone of Ernst and Sivori. That was something to haunt one for a lifetime." Then he would dwell upon the poetry and charm of Vieuxtemps, the brilliancy and *maestria* of Wieniawski, the classical refinement and solidity of Joachim; for he had heard them all.

But, because he happened to be a fiddler (Corelli was his favourite master), he did not restrict his eulogies to the violin. "Just before I came to Norwich," Michau told us, "I heard the new Russian pianist, Rubinstein. He has made an enormous impression. He is a great artist—probably as great an executant as Liszt, whom I heard in his prime. But no one, not even Liszt, could interpret Beethoven like Rubinstein. Plenty of pianists fancy they are doing justice to Beethoven because they can play his sonatas; and, mind, when they do they always take care to have the music in front of them. Rubinstein knows them all by heart, and he is the first man I have seen play them in public from memory. He is a marvel." A few years later I was to discover the truth of this for myself.

Michau brought a new artistic light into our family circle; and among that circle I include my grandparents, because they also liked his society and could discuss Edmund Kean with him, inasmuch as they, too, had seen the "great little man" act. He loved to hear my grandmother imitate (in her glorious well-preserved contralto) the singing of the great English tenor John Braham in "The Death of Nelson" and "Tom Bowling." She had listened to him in St. Andrew's Hall in the 'twenties, when he appeared at the Festival, once with Pasta, once with Malibran—immortal singers both!

But these things I had heard about already. From Michau I caught for the first time a reflected glimpse of what was then going on in London musical life. We could hear Tietjens and Trebelli in oratorio for ourselves at the Festival ; but he could describe to us how magnificent they were in opera, how wonderfully they both sang Mozart in *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Il Flauto Magico*. In his opinion Trebelli's singing was perfect as regards everything but her shake, which, he assured us, had been justly described by Mr. Cipriani Potter, the late Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, as being "so slow and wide that you could throw a hat between the notes." Michau was inclined to be cynical, and could be very sarcastic when dealing with our local notabilities; but he had a strong sense of humour and was never deliberately unkind—like Mr. Phillips, for instance.

He told me he never gave a lesson in dancing to anyone in Norwich but myself. That, however, was in 1870, when I was on a visit to my grandmother, who paid him for teaching me the *menuet de la cour*. Asked whether he could manage it in her partially cleared "best parlour,' he replied that he could "teach the minuet, or any other stately old dance we wished, *on a soup plate*, if necessary."

And he was as good as his word. He first played over the traditional *rococo* tune on his well-worn Cremona ; then he proceeded to execute each separate figure of the dance with the acme of elegant movement and posture—playing for himself throughout—until, by dint of steady repetition for an hour or so every day, he had so impressed the whole thing on my mind that I could go through it (with my professor for partner) from the first lift of the three-cornered hat to the final profound obeisance.

He was very pleased. It was, he declared, his "best

on record." Never before had he taught the complete *menuet de la cour* in so tiny a space or in seventeen lessons. Soon after this he left Norwich and once more took up his residence in London, where we were to meet again.

It was the lure of the metropolis—I can suggest no other cause—that induced my father and mother suddenly to break up their Norwich home in 1866, saying good-bye to Festivals and balls and comparative prosperity, to start their professional lives anew in the crowded capital. But I did not go with them. For two years longer I remained in my grandparents' charge, adding to my store of general knowledge, working less hard at the piano, perhaps, than at languages, and spending many spare hours at the *Argus* office. The French and Latin were with a view to my law exam. ; but I continued to love music and the theatre above everything. Without knowing it, I was all the while steadily shaping my juvenile course towards journalism.

## CHAPTER II

### MY BOYHOOD IN LONDON

The Mid-Victorian Capital—Schooldays and Schoolfellows—The Robertsons—The Grossmiths—Teresa Furtado—The Bancrofts—I Discover Henry Irving—Charles Dickens at St. James's Hall—His Farewell Readings—The Christy Minstrels—Fechter and Phelps—Irving as Digby Grant and Mathias—I Settle upon a Career.

LONDON half a century ago was neither so uncomfortable nor so provincial (save the mark !) as it is commonly imagined to have been at the epoch associated with that quasi-derisory term " mid-Victorian." You cannot miss what has never come within the range of your experience. Of electricity we knew no more than that it enabled us to telegraph; of petroleum, no more than that it was an excellent lamp-oil ; of gas, only that it was a good illuminant ; and of steam, that it drove engines, ships and trains. We were still in the age of horses and of relatively " safe " locomotion.

For a youngster who had read the newspaper and corrected proof-sheets as carefully as I had, the London of 1869 seemed to hold few surprises. The wonder of it lay in the realization, the seeing of the things that I had expected to see. Boy-like, I went for the " novelties " first.

I revelled in the sensation of riding in a railway train that travelled along the tops of houses (the new North London line from Chalk Farm to Broad Street), and in another that moved in a tunnel under the streets (the Underground from Edgware Road to Moorgate Street). I felt a genuine pride as I walked from Holborn to the Old Bailey over the new Viaduct that had just been opened

by Queen Victoria, or along the equally new Thames Embankment stretching from Charing Cross to Blackfriars.

My people were living in the Camden Road, then a remote and quiet suburb with highly respectable semi-detached villas, approached by yellow two-horse omnibuses that journeyed between Victoria Station and the Britannia or the Brecknock Arms some five times per diem. I see them now, those small, ill-shaped buses jogging along with their twenty-six passengers, twelve inside, ten on the "knifeboard," and two on each side of the driver, with the conductor clinging by a strap as he stood upon his precarious step at the back, chaffing his fellows, and shouting his "route" in full-flavoured Cockney dialect. Buses meant economy when one went to the West End or the theatre, for hansoms and four-wheelers were expensive.

My parents had needed those two years to "make good" in their new surroundings. But on the whole the venture had succeeded, despite the burden of a family of five, the latest (born in the Camden Road) my brother Charles, who was to become a well-known dramatist and then, worse luck! to go down in the *Lusitania*. Apart from good private teaching, my father had excellent posts at the North London Collegiate School and at St. Olave's Grammar School, Southwark. My mother, in addition to well-attended classes, had found a kind friend in the wife of a future Leader of the House of Commons, Mr. W. H. Smith, whose daughters, together with their little son (the present Viscount Hambleden), she taught privately at their house in Hyde Park Street.

For myself, change of atmosphere, of companions, of educational methods, had come not a moment too soon.

In Norwich I was fast being "spoiled": a precocious boy with ideas fitting a youth of seventeen rather than a lad of twelve. In London I quickly found my true bearings, thanks to a nature that was, *au fond*, serious and a mind not exactly tending to obtuseness. The change served, therefore, to check my mental precocity whilst allowing the free development of my artistic yearnings. Cut off from the premature appeal of the newspaper office, I became the schoolboy pure and simple.

Yet even now an extraordinary chance was to throw me into the society of boys connected by the closest ties with the profession that had always held the greatest fascination for me. My first "chum" at the South Hampstead Collegiate School, in Belsize Park Gardens, was Tommy Robertson, the only son of T. W. Robertson, the famous author of *Caste*. One of the senior boys, just entering upon his last term, was the future popular comedian Weedon Grossmith, whom I distinctly remember making us all roar with laughter in a burlesque—*Bombastes Furioso*, I think it was—before he left.

Weedon's quaint, dry humour and curious drawl were already in evidence; while among the audience was a spectacled youth of eighteen or nineteen who was pointed out to me as "Cousin George." I was to see him subsequently, "following in father's footsteps" as an entertainer, and later as *the* George Grossmith of the Savoy, whose clever son still flourishes to tell the family tale. Weedon, I may say, was if possible a worse singer than George; but he tried his voice in a song in that school burlesque, and in so doing tried his audience even more. George could at least keep "on the key," and in his own society skits "at the piano" was quite inimitable.

Tommy Robertson took me one afternoon to be intro-

duced to his father, who lived near the school. The popular dramatist (he had not long "come into his own") was then married to his second wife, a charming German lady, whom Tommy could never get on with. I was immediately struck by his kindly, affectionate manner, and not a little delighted when he said that Tommy should take me to the Prince of Wales's Theatre to see one of his plays. He seemed rather amused when I expressed a hope that "it might *not* be *Caste*, because I had already seen that twice in Norwich." "Don't be afraid," he said, "we have a piece called *School* running now, and you shall go to see that." I remember liking it very much, but not quite so much as *Caste*; and Tommy agreed with me.

On a subsequent visit to his father's house, Tommy introduced me to his aunt, Miss Madge Robertson, afterwards my dear friend Mrs. Kendal. She had just emerged into the limelight as a comedy actress of distinct talent. She was then a merry, plump, joyous creature of some twenty summers, with a pair of twinkling eyes and a laugh like a peal of bells. She was not yet married, nor do I think it was until she had become Mrs. Kendal that she achieved her principal successes, as Galatea in Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea*, and Rosalind in *As You Like It*. One day her children, who used their father's family name of Grimston, were to become pupils of my father. But that was in the future. What I could chiefly see on first acquaintance was the sweet, lovable, impulsive nature that has never changed in all these years.

Another popular London actress, whose friendship I was soon to share with Tommy Robertson, was the great Adelphi favourite Teresa Furtado. To be candid, we boys were both fearfully in love with her; for she was extremely

beautiful, had a speaking-voice of exquisite charm, and could sing well. It was not, however, through Tommy that I came to know her. Miss Furtado and her parents rented part of a large house in Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, the upper floors of which were occupied by a well-known painter named Sayer, whose wife was a teacher of dancing. Owing to ill-health Madame Sayer was compelled to give up work and sell her "practice." It was purchased by my mother, and forthwith we became very friendly with the Sayers—also in turn with the Furtados.

Tommy and I had both been to the Adelphi to see Miss Furtado in a "powerful" melodrama called *The Sea of Ice*, the big scene of which lands the chief characters upon some ice-floes in the Arctic regions; in due time the ice melts and breaks up, and the party are only rescued through the courage and resolution of the hero. I need scarcely say I would have given all I had in the world to be that hero (no other than that dashing and popular *jeune premier* Henry Neville). As if this were not enough, I had also seen the bewitching Teresa as Cosette in a touching version of Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables," bearing the English title of *The Yellow Passport*. After that my state became hopeless. Still, it was some comfort to find, on comparing notes, that Tommy's condition was as bad as my own.

I thought I had the best of it, however, when one day I received a note inviting me, to my intense joy, to partake of mid-day dinner at Percy Street on the following Sunday. Imagine my disgust when I found, on arriving, that I had been preceded only a few minutes by my best friend and chum, who had carefully imitated my example by not breathing a word about the invitation. It was absurdly like

a farce. "*You* here?" we both exclaimed, almost simultaneously; and there we sat, in the drawing-room, glaring at each other without saying a word, until our too lovely hostess sailed in to make matters worse by affectionately kissing Tommy, whilst she only shook hands with me. My appetite—a boy's, too!—was rather spoilt in consequence. (Tommy was better-looking than I was.)

After the meal I made two discoveries. One was that Miss Furtado, apart from having known Tommy from his infancy, was going to appear soon in a new play by his father—Robertson's first and only attempt at melodrama. (It was called *The Nightingale*, and written for Teresa and her gifted actor-manager, Benjamin Webster.) I was to be there on the first night and hear her sing a new song called "The Nightingale's Trill," composed expressly for her by my friend of later years, Wilhelm Ganz.* Discovery number two was rather in the nature of a cold douche. It was that Teresa had a grown-up lover, John Clarke, the well-known lame actor with the acidulated voice, who came to pay her a Sunday visit, bringing a huge bag of cob-nuts; and somehow he quickly succeeded in making us quit the field.

We found out shortly afterwards—in a sense to our advantage—that these two were engaged to be married; though, alas, it proved a very unhappy union. John Clarke could never possibly have made a suitable husband for that handsome, high-spirited girl. I saw her act again more than once—notably a delightful impersonation of Esmeralda (with James Fernandez as Quasimodo) in an adaptation by Andrew Halliday of Victor Hugo's *Notre*

* The production duly took place at the Adelphi Theatre on January 15th, 1870, but neither the charm of the heroine nor her graceful rendering of Mr. Ganz's ballad (which subsequently won much popularity) could save the piece from dire failure.

*Dame*. But I visited her less and less frequently, and after two or three years of married life she died, to the unfeigned regret of a large public and the infinite sorrow of two small boys.

Meanwhile, though working hard at school, and triumphantly passing the "Preliminary" for the Law, my theatrical proclivities were receiving an amount of encouragement that put every other kind of recreation almost entirely out of my thoughts. It was not that I loved music less, but that I loved the drama more. For a time I gave up the regular study of the piano and merely amused myself by trying to master my brother Max's accompaniments and playing my own vamped-up selections of operatic tunes by ear. These trifles at least pleased the family.

But the theatre was my real passion, and it was my good fortune to see all the best actors and actresses of that day. Tommy took me frequently to the Prince of Wales's, where I saw the Bancrofts and their wonderful little company at the dawn of a new era for the stage. I was recalling to Sir Squire Bancroft this interesting period whilst returning with him, not long ago, on a P. & O. liner from Gibraltar after he had been staying at Algeciras. Those early days at the little theatre in Tottenham Street were the greatest of his honoured career, and he has, of course, written fully about them in his Reminiscences. But there was a point I wanted him to settle for me, and I asked him :

"Do you think, Sir Squire, that the best part you ever acted was in one of the Robertson plays ?"

He thought for a moment, then said slowly, in his customary quiet way :

"No ; I think that the best performance I ever gave

was as Triplet in Charles Reade and Tom Taylor's play, *Masks and Faces*."

The first time I went to a theatre in London, whilst I was spending a week with my parents in Camden Road, late in 1867 (a few months before I came up for good), I had a remarkable bit of luck. For on a rainy November night, at the old St. James's Theatre, I saw—when he was a comparatively unknown, struggling artist—the man who was to become the greatest English actor of his time.

The house was barely half full; the piece, entitled *Hunted Down*, was only a moderate success; the chief character, that of a persecuted wife, displayed to advantage a graceful and sympathetic actress, Miss Herbert, then in the front rank of her profession.

My interest, however, quickly centred in the villainous husband, who is supposed to be dead, but returns to life to molest and worry his unfortunate wife. I gathered that he was supposed to possess a sort of mesmeric power, and one had only to catch the glare of his piercing magnetic eyes to believe it. The actor's name was wholly unfamiliar to most people—certainly to my uncle Philip, who had taken quite a family party of us to help to fill the unoccupied stalls. But, for me, he intensified the thrill of the melodrama to a point almost beyond bearing. I had never until then seen an actor of this "hypnotic" type. There were moments, I remember, when he made me want to scream; one in particular, when I would have shouted, had I dared, to warn his wife that he was behind her chair. No wonder she feared and loathed him. His terrible eyes haunted me for weeks.

It was not until years later that I found out that this clever actor (then about thirty-three) was Henry Irving.

Those hypnotic eyes were unmistakable. The haunting husband in *Hunted Down* clearly foreshadowed the haunted Mathias of *The Bells*. His friend and biographer, Bram Stoker,* makes mention of the fact that he played Captain Absolute in *The Rivals* with Miss Herbert, though not during this particular season at the St. James's ; but not a word does he write about *Hunted Down*, which, under the circumstances, I regard it as a privilege to have seen. One day, during a chat at the Lyceum, I asked Sir Henry whether he thought it would be worth while to revive this drama. His reply was characteristic of his dislike for parts that wholly alienated the sympathies of his audience :

" No ; it is a play that shows off the actress only. I never cared for the part of the husband ; he is such an unutterable scoundrel ! " And yet he played him magnificently.

I saw little of Tommy Robertson after I left school at Christmas, 1869. When we parted then it was understood that he was going to be an actor, I a lawyer. How I longed to change places with him ! Still, if his parental programme was fulfilled, mine was not. The legal exam. so creditably passed proved for me only the " preliminary " to a year's clerical work with a Portuguese baron who sold his port wine in London and lived in Dorset Square. That year was followed by another of useful experience in the service of the old firm of Gillows, in Oxford Street, where Selfridge's now stands. In the early autumn of 1872 I went to Liverpool.

My parents meanwhile had moved to Princes Street, Hanover Square, and it was there, with their consent, that Tommy and I satisfied our histrionic cravings for a brief space by giving a performance of *Box and Cox* before a

* " Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving," p. 2.

numerous gathering of our mutual friends. We shared the title-rôles to the general satisfaction, and my school chum unquestionably showed that he had the family gift which subsequently enabled him (together with his sister Maud) to exploit his father's plays all over the country. I remember he wanted my mother to play Mrs. Bouncer in this juvenile performance of *Box and Cox*, but she protested that her day for private theatricals had passed ; so the part of the immortal landlady was taken by another of my schoolmates—to wit, Louis Verrey, son of the famous Regent Street *restaurateur*, whose back premises abutted on our own.

When I saw Tommy at his father's funeral at the Abney Park Cemetery, the poor boy was pleased to be prophetic. As he shook hands with me, his eyes heavy with weeping, he whispered, " Young as the pater was, I shall not make such old bones as *he* did ! " Ere long the prophecy came true, and when Tommy died I lost my boyhood's dearest friend.

From 1869 to 1872 I was laying in a store of noteworthy recollections. Not the least precious among these is that of having been taken by my mother in 1870 to hear Charles Dickens give one of his memorable final readings at St. James's Hall.* I think I had by then read most of his novels, but I had never seen him, and it was a great moment for me when he mounted the steps leading to the platform. He was above medium height and looked rather

* Dickens gave his first series of thirty readings in London in 1866, under the management of the Chappells, who paid him £50 a night. In the following year, after he had cleared £20,000 in America, he made a contract with them for 100 farewell readings, for which he was to receive £8,000. That series was interrupted by the serious illness of the novelist, but when he recovered he arranged to give twelve final readings at St. James's Hall early in 1870. The last one that he gave took place in March, and it was either at that or the reading which preceded it that I was present.

thin, I thought ; his hair and beard were getting quite grey. Failing health notwithstanding, he carried himself well as he walked to his desk, and there was a pleasant if somewhat wistful smile upon the familiar countenance.

It seemed wonderful to behold the renowned author of " Pickwick " standing before me in the flesh. In the moments of silence before he began to speak, I seemed to experience a mental vision of his most lovable characters, a rapid *coup d'œil* of scenes of heart-rending pathos that I had cried over, a flood of deliciously quaint flashes of humour that had sent me into fits of laughter. Charles Dickens was, in his own inimitable fashion, to depict some of these with his rich, expressive voice that evening ; and he commenced with " The Christmas Carol."

I would not now qualify it as a " reading," for he seldom gave a glance at the printed page. Using the art of a consummate actor, he identified himself with every character, subtly altering or modifying his tones to heighten the suggestion of each personality. Amazing were the swiftness of his contrasts, the vividness and depth of his sentiment, the rare comedy of his humorous touches. They left one simply breathless.

In a long excerpt from " Oliver Twist " he differentiated in a masterly way the voices of Bill Sikes and Fagin, of Nancy and the Artful Dodger. I could almost believe myself in a theatre listening to them all on the stage. The dramatic movement of each scene was portrayed with irresistible force, with the utmost measure of truth and conviction. One passage more especially remains in my mind, even as the tones come back to my ear to this day, as though Charles Dickens were again uttering his own living words through a gramophone. It occurred in the bitter scene (entitled " Fatal Consequences ") between

Fagin and Sikes, where the Jew warns his visitor against Noah Claypole.

His Fagin here was a masterpiece of characterization. With his hoarse, rasping voice, his Israelitish lisp and East-end Cockney accent of the 'thirties, and his command of the whole gamut of racial inflections, he made Fagin even more Hebrew in type than the text of the novel can suggest. In this scene the Jew says repeatedly, "*Suppose* that lad—*suppose* he was to do all this, what then?" But Dickens did not pronounce the "suppose" as he wrote it. He growled it out each time with a hissing lisp—"Thuppothe" or "thuppothin"—and with a snarl of concentrated hate and cunning that was perhaps beyond his own power of verbal description. Again and again he made his audience shudder.

After this thrilling episode he gave us a scene from "Pickwick." It was wonderful, too; yet somehow I have always retained the impression that Charles Dickens was greater as a reader or reciter in his gruesome moments than in his lighter passages, though nowhere greater, perhaps, than in his realization of sheer pathos. Yet, as one listened to him, the laughter responded quite as quickly as the tears. On the stage he would have been another Robson—as convincing a tragedian as he was a comedian.

From Charles Dickens to Artemus Ward seems a far cry now. It was not so then, when the great English novelist and the bright American humorist were giving almost simultaneously much-sought readings from their own much-read books on opposite sides of Piccadilly. The "lanky Yankee," as someone called him, appeared at the old Egyptian Hall (which used to stand nearly *vis-à-vis* of Burlington House) and, with his quaint panorama

for a background, told his amusing stories in a dry yet unctuous manner that kept one in continuous laughter. But that was during one brief visit only.

Another form of American humorous entertainment, established in the same neighbourhood in the early 'sixties, flourished there without intermission for over forty years. Indeed, it was the boast of the " Christy Minstrels " (also known as the Moore and Burgess Minstrels) that they " never performed out of London "; because, I suppose, their popularity was so extraordinary that they had no need to challenge comparisons with the many similar troupes then touring the country. Anyhow, their broad, shallow room under the large St. James's Hall (where the distant din of their " bones " and tambourine and big drum would not infrequently invade the delicate pianissimo of a quartet or a sonata) used to be crowded to overflowing twice every day.

No one could pretend for a moment that the performances of the Christy Minstrels had any artistic merit. Yet in a way they compared favourably with the music-hall standard of the period. Besides, they were of the harmless order that made them equally suitable for the amusement of children and " grown-ups "; and this, combined with their inexhaustible supply of funny repartee and farcical sketches—the more effective, probably, because of the burnt-cork disguise and the pseudo-nigger dialect—fully accounted for their universal appeal.

The higher intellectual culture, or, shall we say, the improved taste, of a more advanced generation no doubt demands entertainment of a type more subtle than this. Yet I am not prepared to say that the " Minstrels " did not deserve their evanescent popularity quite as well as the revues or the " pierrot " troupes of the present era.

Their chief proprietor and " end man," Mr. W. G. Moore, was certainly a genius in his class.

Before closing this retrospect of my boyhood's experiences at the theatre I ought to recall two famous actors whom I saw quite late in their careers—Charles Fechter and Samuel Phelps. The former, half a Frenchman, with the most delicious English accent imaginable, was thought to be the best romantic actor seen since Lemaître ; Phelps the finest exponent of Shakespearean characters and old English comedy since Macready. Between them, in my opinion, they largely influenced—by causing it to merge into a single mentality—the artistic thought of Henry Irving. Different from both in technical methods as in all physical qualities, Irving yet united in himself the intense romanticism and finished art of Fechter, superimposed on the rare versatility—the tragic power, the skill in characterization, and the rich sense of comedy—that distinguished Phelps. And a very remarkable combination it made.

Fechter was adorable ; no wonder the women were all in love with him. Unfortunately I did not see him as Hamlet, but in one of his principal romantic parts, namely, Henri de Lagardère in *The Duke's Motto* (" I am here ! "). I remember well his musical, persuasive voice, his manly elegant bearing, and, above all, that wonderful accent when he warbled his confession, " Blanche, I lov' you."

Phelps, on the other hand, I was privileged to see in nearly the whole round of his principal parts, mostly at Sadler's Wells, others later on at the series of revivals given at the old Gaiety Theatre. He had his rivals in his own line, of course, but neither William Creswick nor Barry Sullivan—good tragic actors both—could compare with Phelps save in elocutionary art ; in variety of resource,

subtlety of expression, and wealth of comic touches he was infinitely their superior.

Perhaps the first striking example of his influence was seen in Irving's first real London success—his Digby Grant in James Albery's comedy *The Two Roses*, which ran for several months at the Vaudeville Theatre in 1870-71. Not until I saw him then did it come home to me that this was the actor whose "hypnotic" eyes had so haunted me four years before in *Hunted Down*. The contrast otherwise made it hard to believe, for the villainous husband was now changed into a scheming father replete with touches of cynical humour and diverting slyness. Here was the fascination of brilliant comedy replacing the repulsiveness of melodramatic devilry.

Bram Stoker may have been perfectly correct in his surmise that Irving, in his "make-up" as Digby Grant, imitated the personality of a certain secret agent of the Bonapartes, named the Chevalier Wikoff, who lived in Kensington. It was not the least striking feature of a singularly clever impersonation. But it did not explain the frequency of those Phelps-like grunts and "ha's" and sudden contrasts of mood and tone which thence-forward became part and parcel of the Irvingesque method.

They came out even more strongly a year or so later, when Henry Irving at last took the town by storm with his vivid creation (far superior to the original French) of the conscience-stricken innkeeper in *The Bells*. But the individual style of the maturing artist had also developed by now. Night after night he was holding his public breathless with that wonderful hypnotic spell, with the magnetic glare of the eyes, with the fixed look of horror each time the gradual crescendo of the relentless sleigh-bells forced itself upon his ears ; and, alternating with the

pauses of silence, one would hear the strange ejaculations, the odd jerky vocal sounds—now nasal grunts, now deep growls—that had quickly become identified with the new actor.

Naturalness and realism. Such were to be the predominant characteristics of the modern school of acting that started into life with the advent of Henry Irving at the Lyceum.

New friends and new surroundings, both during and after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, tended to bring about a marked change of ideas concerning my own future. The more I saw of the theatre the more I loved it ; at the same time the less strong grew my hankering after the stage as a profession. (Perhaps I was getting impressed with my unworthiness or unfitness for the job.) On the other hand, I was hearing more good music and being stimulated by it to study not only the piano, but theory and counterpoint, for the sheer enjoyment of understanding music better.

I was likewise working hard at business—a very efficacious corrective, for a lad of fifteen, to anything in the nature of artistic dreams ; and what business did not accomplish for me in that direction was certainly achieved by my very practical parents. They decided that I should go away for a time. I had not done badly at Gillows', but somehow there did not seem to be great scope for me to rise there, and so an offer from a Liverpool merchant to take me into his office to learn the shipping business was gladly accepted—at least by my father.

In August, 1872, I left London for the big Lancashire town, to spend there nearly two of the happiest and most interesting years of my life.

## CHAPTER III

### SOME GREAT ARTISTS AT LIVERPOOL

Liverpool as I found it in 1872—The St. George's Hall Organ—A Provincial Theatrical Centre—*The Happy Land*—Visit of Her Majesty's Opera Company—Theresa Tietjens: Her Norma and Semiramide—Trebelli, Ilma di Murska and Agnesi—Campanini, Del Puente and Foli—James Henry Mapleson and the Burning of Her Majesty's Theatre—Ristori in Liverpool: Her Farewell Appearances—Visit of the "Pop" Quartet—Return to London (1874).

IT was not with the pleasantest anticipations that I returned to a provincial existence after my four more or less exciting years in the busy metropolis. However, I had an agreeable surprise. I found Liverpool in 1872 a town full of life and movement, showing already many evidences of modern progress and improving architecture; the same flourishing port with huge docks, upon the banks of a noble estuary, that we know to-day. I quickly learned to like the place and its warm-hearted people.

In matters of art, though, Liverpool was then distinctly behind the times. For purely musical enterprise my native city could have given it a start and a beating. It had once had an irregular Musical Festival, boasting the solitary red-letter record of having performed Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* for the first time in England. That event was in 1836; but the weight of the distinction had proved such an encumbrance that the meeting was never held again until the autumn of the year that I left (1874). That was the last of the series, and it was, by the way, conducted by our old Norwich

friend, Sir Julius Benedict. Apart from the Festival, there was nothing of importance beyond the concerts of the local Philharmonic Society, founded in 1840, and conducted first by Alfred Mellon, then in turn by Benedict, Max Bruch, Sir Charles Hallé, and Sir Frederic Cowen.

The Art Gallery was not yet built ; but St. George's Hall and the Philharmonic Hall—the former with the finest organ, the latter with the finest acoustics of any room of its size, in the kingdom—had been erected some few years. No; Liverpool would not compare musically with Manchester, some thirty miles away, where Hallé had established the only first-rate orchestra to be heard outside London.

But the St. George's Hall organ was a delight—a unique treasure such as any community might be proud of ; and the Corporation organist, the late William T. Best, was the man to do it justice. He was then the greatest living English organist—so far above his fellows, indeed, that for years he was the soloist invited to Sydenham to play the organ concerto at the Handel Festival. In Liverpool William Best gave " Corporation recitals " twice a week, the charge for admission to which was threepence. I was soon to learn to my profit what an education they were, not alone as regards the art of organ-playing, but to hear the fugues of Bach, the concertos of Handel, the excerpts from the oratorios, and organ transcriptions galore.

Nor shall I ever forget the ravishing effects that Best used to extract from his ethereal *vox humana* stop (detestable, as a rule) in melodies such as Mendelssohn's " Auf Flügeln des Gesanges " and Schubert's Serenade. The audiences were invariably large, and the programmes

listened to from first to last with keen enjoyment and appreciation.

I have no intention of dwelling upon the business side of my stay in Liverpool. My duties embraced several kinds of work, both in the office and at the docks, where I had to check the landing and transhipment of cargo from Holland and Germany before it was exported to Australia and New Zealand. It was a hard but not a disagreeable occupation, though inadequately rewarded by my small salary.

I managed to permit myself the luxury of a seat in the pit of one of the theatres at least once a week ; more when we had the opera. The theatrical interest in Liverpool in these early 'seventies was truly absorbing ; of managerial enterprise, in the engagement of first-rate London companies for a week or a fortnight, it must have been one of the most go-ahead and profitable towns on the northern circuit. If one only had the patience to wait, it was a sure matter of *tout vient à* Liverpool ; there was no need for the enthusiast to hasten to town to see or hear " the best thing going."

I remember, indeed, one instance where Liverpool distinctly scored off London. It was when the metropolis had been stirred to its depths by the production at the Court Theatre of a burlesque called *The Happy Land*, wherein were vividly caricatured three members of the reigning Government, namely, the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone ; the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Robert Lowe (afterwards Lord Sherbrooke) ; and the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. James Ayrton. The skit was so severe and the make-up of the actors so life-like that at Sloane Square the show never got beyond its first night. It was immediately stopped by the Lord Chamberlain.

But the powers of that official did not extend then, any more than they do now, to the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, where the burlesque was promptly mounted with an admirable local cast. The three politicians were here made up to the life ; and two of them—G. W. Anson as Gladstone, and Henry Ashley as "Bobby" Lowe—were destined afterwards to make big names for themselves in London. The burlesque had an unusually long run for such things, and I heard that quite a number of important people came from various parts of the country expressly to see it.

I had been occasionally to the Opera before going to Liverpool. I had heard Patti in *Don Giovanni ;* Christine Nilsson in *Faust* and *Robert le Diable ;* Ilma di Murska in *Il Flauto Magico* and *The Flying Dutchman ;* Tietjens in *Fidelio* and *Lucrezia Borgia*, and with her in the latter Trebelli as Maffio Orsini, and Italo Campanini (on the night of his début at Drury Lane) as Gennaro.

I also cherished agreeable recollections of a wonderful but forgotten season of old Italian operas at the Lyceum in 1870, mostly conducted by Tito Mattei, whose wife, Madame Colombo, was among the *prime donne*. There were in that troupe one or two superb *buffo* artists (Borella for one) of a type that has now practically ceased to exist; and the two months' repertory included among other operas Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segreto*, Mozart's *Così fan Tutte*, Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, Ricci's *Crispino e la Comare*, Donizetti's *Figlia del Reggimento*, and Petrella's *Le Precauzioni*, a charming *opera buffa* then only eight years old.

With these souvenirs in mind, I was much excited when the late James Henry Mapleson, impresario of Her

Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket, announced a fortnight's season of "grand opera" at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, in the autumn of 1873. For that rich and rare opportunity I scrupulously laid by every penny I could spare, and treated myself to a seat in the pit or the gallery every other evening. My only disappointment was at not being able to hear Christine Nilsson again. She was too expensive (£200 a night) for Mr. Mapleson to be able to exploit her in these provincial towns; besides, except in the summer, she was always engaged at Vienna, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere on the Continent. But the visit meant my hearing such singers as Tietjens, Trebelli, Marie Marimon, Ilma di Murska, Campanini, Fancelli, Agnesi, and Foli, not to mention a host of lesser lights.

Tietjens, I found, had grown excessively stout; but her voice sounded as round and clear, and wellnigh as fresh and powerful, as when I had heard her in Norwich just ten years before. She was one of the hardest workers as well as one of the most conscientious artists of her day. When she was ill (which was to happen only too frequently during the three and a half years of life that now remained to her) her first thought was not how she should spare herself, but how not to disappoint her public.

During that fortnight at Liverpool I saw her as Norma, as Pamina, as Donna Anna, as Leonora (*Trovatore*), and as Semiramide—a veritable chaplet of her finest rôles—and she was equally magnificent in them all. Not one of her contemporaries possessed her extraordinary nobility and grandeur of style, whether as singer or as actress; and it is certain that she has not been surpassed in her line by any artist who has lived since.

Her Norma was a tragic figure of incomparable splen-

**JENNY LIND**

*(From the bust by J. Durham, engraved by W. Roffe.)*

**TIETJENS**

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dour and force; her Donna Anna added a tremendous sweep of gesture to an amazing combination of tenderness and vituperative power; her Semiramide focused all these qualities into one great character. Vocally, I think she impressed most strongly in the last-named part, because of the sustained brilliancy of her *coloratura*—the ease, the flexibility of the execution, and the impeccable purity of the vocal line.

Of course, I was unable to make comparisons then. Later in life, when I was speaking of Tietjens to James Davison, the critic, of *The Times*, he said to me : " Tietjens was the last of the great line of dramatic singers that ran from Catalani and Pasta down to Malibran and Grisi, Alboni and Henriette Sontag. She represented that rare school of Italian vocalization which seems to be now dying out. Even Adelina Patti exemplifies it with a shade of difference."

But hard as that difference might have been to perceive—still harder to define—I think I caught it in " Bel raggio." In that showy air Patti was always Patti, coruscating with all the lustre of her matchless voice and brilliant art ; whereas Tietjens, with her robust yet delicate *cantilena*, her rhythmical yet elastic scale passages, the even yet spontaneous swing of her phrasing, the poignant tone and expression of her declamation, was always Semiramide, the tragic queen, in love with her unknown son.

In Rossini's opera Tietjens was supported by Trebelli (Arsace) and Agnesi (Assur)—an unsurpassable trio. The famous contralto was a born Parisienne, despite her Italian-sounding *nom de théâtre*, made out of her own surname, Gillebert, reversed, minus the first letter. Her voice had an individual quality, an exquisite beauty and sweetness of timbre that used to haunt the ear long after it had issued from the mouth of this beautiful woman, whose personal

grace and elegance were only equalled by the refinement and charm of her art. She was, moreover, an actress of singular intelligence ; and I say this notwithstanding her too " ladylike " and unsatisfying Carmen, whose piquant *habañera* she was the first singer to introduce in this country. Again, despite my friend Michau's borrowed description of her shake, when she sang with Tietjens the duet " Giorno d'orrore," the timing of the double trill in thirds, as well as the blending of the two voices and the shading of the *nuances*, was simply perfect. To excel this was beyond the power of Patti and Scalchi, who first sang Semiramide and Arsace at Covent Garden in 1878, the year after Tietjens's death.

Agnesi, a superb singer, was a Belgian by birth and training, and had been a *protégé* of Rossini, who not only admired his singing but declared him to be a composer of considerable merit.* His rendering of the difficult roulades in the part of Assur was simply amazing. The extraordinary technical facility of this *basso cantante* recalled the singing of a woman, while his voice was of unusual beauty and range. He was, moreover, an accomplished oratorio singer, an exemplar of the true Handelian tradition, and for many years he appeared at all the leading English festivals. In London he remained faithful to Mapleson and Her Majesty's, where I heard him in all his finest rôles, including Mephistopheles, Duca Alfonso, Conte Rodolfo, Pizarro, and even the comic Sergente Sulpizio of the *Figlia del Reggimento*.

An artist whom I admired immensely was Ilma di Murska. She was a Hungarian, and said to be, in ordinary

* Agnesi composed *inter alia* a grand opera, which was performed at Brussels, and a comic opera, written to a libretto by Scribe.

life, a rather "untamed" specimen. She had a mania for taking a number of pets about with her on her tours, and I remember hearing at the Grand Hotel, where she stayed in Liverpool, that she was accompanied by a Newfoundland dog, a cat, a monkey, and two parrots. Once on the stage, however, apart from her rooted objection to rehearsals (probably in imitation of Patti), she was as free from eccentricity as her colleagues.

It was in Liverpool that I first heard Ilma di Murska in her famous impersonation of the Queen of Night in the *Flauto Magico*. The astounding ease, the smooth, bell-like tone, the pure, resonant scale passages with which she executed her trying *fiorituri*, crowned by the clear, liquid fullness of her F in alt, gave a sufficient answer to critics who formerly complained that in "Non paventar" and in "Gli angui d'inferno" Mozart had demanded the impossible.* To this day, the memory of di Murska's supreme performance of these pieces has made it hard for me to put up with anything less perfect. Her singing in parts like Dinorah, the Queen in the *Huguenots*, and the Princess in *Robert le Diable* was not less irreproachable. Her Senta, which I had heard at Drury Lane, in 1870, has almost escaped my recollection; but Santley, who was the "Olandese Dannato" of that production, used to declare that her dramatic power in the duet of Act II was quite remarkable; while Arditi, who conducted, once exclaimed that as a vocal *tour de force* it was "*incredibile*."

I could not, of course, resist the temptation of again listening to Italo Campanini in *Lucrezia Borgia*. With Tietjens, Trebelli and Agnesi for companions, he brought down the house at Liverpool as he had the previous year

* Mozart wrote this music for his younger sister-in-law, Frau Hofer, who, according to one writer, was "a very unpleasing singer; her voice is not high enough for the part, and she squeaks it."

at Drury Lane. He was now hailed as the genuine successor of Mario and Giuglini. But for sheer beauty of voice I preferred his rival, Fancelli, whose sweetness and power were extraordinary; and he had a splendid high C. He had been a tanner by trade, and was singing at his work when someone discovered him. Vocally he had had practically no training. He had a good ear, however, and learned his rôles by having them played over until he knew them by heart. In this way he mastered Lohengrin, and for opulence of tone I never heard a finer.

Yet another of Mapleson's new *trouvailles* was the Neapolitan baritone, Giuseppe del Puente, who five years later created the part of the Toreador in England, when *Carmen* was first performed in Italian at Her Majesty's. He had a voice of singular charm, easily produced, possessing a delicious *mezza voce*, and managed with consummate skill. After he had appeared as Escamillo no one would believe that he was not a Spaniard, so true was he to the beau-ideal of the *espada* type; and it was true that he had Spanish blood in his veins. No one, in my opinion, ever sang the " Toreador's Song " quite so well as Del Puente; and no one made the bullfighter's conquest of Carmen so easy to understand.

I have not spoken of all the singers whom I heard in Liverpool, though scarcely one failed to leave a name renowned in the operatic annals of that period; for example, the French high soprano, Marie Marimon, a most finished artist, who subsequently followed Ilma di Murska in the *soprano leggiero* parts; and last, but not least, the popular Irish basso who veiled his nationality under the pseudonym of Signor Foli. In succumbing to that act of human weakness poor Jack Foley only imitated a custom common to his time, and he should be forgiven, for he was a very fine

artist. His was a sympathetic voice of deep luscious quality, with a range such as one seldom hears nowadays.

I would like to tell a story here concerning James Henry Mapleson, the provider of this operatic feast, and perhaps the most notable impresario that this country has ever had. He was not much over forty at the time of which I write, and I first saw him—a handsome, upstanding, martial figure, with his pleasant face, big moustache and broad, well-starched shirt-front—when he came before the curtain at the Theatre Royal to make a speech. I was not to know him personally for another ten years.

Mapleson was a man of ideas and of infinite resource. Hope sprang eternal in his ample breast. As a critic once wrote of him, " In the darkest day he could see light ahead —the lantern of Will-o'-the-Wisp mostly; but that he never knew till he found himself in a bog." His escapes were miraculous, but he could generally boast that in incurring danger he had achieved results that counted. He was almost always in debt; nevertheless, being an honest man, he paid when he could, and then borrowed again. He knew more about music than most impresarios, and his knowledge, if superficial, aided his extraordinary *flair* for new operas and new singers that were worth having.

In this way he came by treasures like *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Mefistofele*, and other operas that he could appreciate before even the public abroad had appraised them at their actual value. He had reason to deplore his bad luck in losing Adelina Patti in 1861, after he had hooked the gilded fish for his then chief, Mr. E. T. Smith—and, as he thought, landed her for himself. Ultimately, however, it was Frederic Gye of Covent Garden who won the prize;

and the loss very nearly broke Mapleson's heart. Patti would, no doubt, have made a much larger fortune for him than she made for Gye, because Mapleson would have known better how to profit by the "golden eggs" which the diva laid on distant shores.

Now, when Her Majesty's Theatre was burnt down in 1867, Mapleson had run the risk of having to abandon his opera season. It was his astute acting manager, Henry Jarrett, who really saved the situation. According to what I believe to be the true version, the news of the conflagration was conveyed to Jarrett by his friend James W. Davison, *The Times* critic, who lodged in the same house, and woke him up shortly after midnight on the 8th of December with the information that Her Majesty's was burning down. Jarrett, a very calm, imperturbable sort of man, quietly took a pinch of snuff and said: "Leave me alone now; I want to think." And he thought to good purpose.

Foreseeing that Mr. Gye, always an able strategist in an emergency, would endeavour as soon as he heard of the burning of Her Majesty's to prevent his rival from obtaining another theatre, and knowing that the only theatre suitable for an opera season was Drury Lane (then leased to F. B. Chatterton), Jarrett determined to waylay the lessee before anyone else could get at him. He therefore presented himself at Chatterton's residence at Clapham early on the morning after the fire, before the lessee of Drury Lane had come down. Thereupon he interviewed him in his bedroom, and with such good effect that before 9.30 a.m. Jarrett was back in London with an agreement letting the National Theatre to Mapleson from March until the end of July. At half-past ten Mr. Gye also arrived at Clapham, ready to offer a premium of £200 if Mr. Chatterton would undertake not to let Drury Lane for

Italian Opera. He found that he was exactly a couple of hours too late.

Mapleson preserved his air of cheerfulness under the most adverse conditions, and, had he lived to see the Great War, he would (being a popular colonel of Volunteers) have ably led the chorus of those who refused ever to be "downhearted." The most serious disappointment of his chequered career, after the Patti, was having to leave uncompleted the National Opera House, partially erected under his auspices in 1875 on the site where New Scotland Yard now stands. This was perhaps the best of his many excellent "ideas," and would probably, if carried out, have proved a blessing to the cause of opera in the metropolis.*

In the later years—those early 'eighties during which he was "exploiting" Patti in America—Mapleson grew rather sensitive to criticism, and once was quite hurt because in the *Sunday Times* I began a notice of his opening night by remarking that "Mr. Mapleson, having washed down the columns of Her Majesty's Theatre, last night opened his doors," etc. Next day I received from him the following note:

Thanks for your very helpful critique. The columns of Her Majesty's are exposed at the bottom of the Haymarket to an

* This projected opera house would undoubtedly have been built and opened in 1876 but for the ruinous outlay incurred in completing the foundations, which, as in the case of so many other Embankment structures, were found to have been started upon springs and quicksands. The first brick was laid by Tietjens, and the foundation-stone (on December 16, 1875) by the Duke of Edinburgh, the musical second son of Queen Victoria. Mapleson writes: "The building was entirely isolated and connected with the District Railway, so that the audience on leaving had merely to descend the stairs and enter the train. A subterranean passage, moreover, led into the Houses of Parliament, and I had made arrangements by which silent Members, after listening to beautiful music instead of dull debates, might return to the House on hearing the division-bell. The Parliamentary support thus secured would alone have given an ample source of revenue."—"Memoirs," Vol. I, pp. 181–2.

unusual quantity of London soot and grime, and to paint them costs a lot of money. However, I am glad to say they now stand to all appearance as clean and respectable as those to which you contribute.—Yours, J. H. M.

The great Italian actress, Ristori, paid her farewell visit to Liverpool, under Mapleson's management, during the summer of 1873. Otherwise I might never have had an opportunity of seeing the famous tragédienne whom people were wont to describe as "the Italian Rachel." My father, who had seen both actresses in their prime when in Paris in 1848, did not agree that the two names could be linked together even in this sense. Their styles were completely unlike, and in his opinion Rachel was the greater genius. Although this was the first time I had ever heard Italian spoken on the stage, Ristori's diction was so faultless, her facial expression and gestures were so graphic, that it seemed to me I understood the meaning of every word she uttered.

She appeared in her four greatest characters—Medea, Elizabeth, Maria Stuart and Marie Antoinette—and I saw her in the last two. Stately in figure, not beyond middle height, with a walk that was the poetry of slow motion, she trod the stage with the dignity of a veritable queen. Her sustained musical voice did not suggest the *voix d'or* of Sarah Bernhardt, but rather the rich timbre and the thunderous bourdon of an organ. When charged with deep emotion it rose and fell like waves in a storm, and seemed to touch every note in the gamut of human expression. The rhythm and nobility of her elocution brought the poetic beauty of every line into the highest relief.

Ristori's acting did indeed attain the very acme of histrionic intensity and force. I had never dreamt of such

overwhelming power, of declamatory energy that could so carry away an audience in the words of a strange tongue. Thanks to this and to her own magnetic personality, the ignorant spectator found it hard to credit either of her Queens with a single feminine foible or any weakness of character. Her Mary Queen of Scots was the most loving and most lovable of women ; always sinned against rather than sinning; a creature of sanctity whom her lovers must worship on bended knee ; whom her enemies must perforce respect even whilst they persecuted her.

In the last scene of *Marie Antoinette* the expression of eyes and mouth sufficed to tell the story of her conflicting emotions, apart from a voice vibrating with passion and gestures that formed an epitome of significance and grace. Never shall I forget her final exit When Sanson, the executioner, fastened the cords that bound her wrists, and then proceeded to tighten them, one saw the spasm of suffering, the look of actual physical torture, as it came over her noble, queen-like countenance; then the effort to over come and hide her agony as, with eyes raised and head erect, she slowly dragged one foot after another in the march to the guillotine and death. At that moment there was not a dry eye in the house.

This wonderful exit affected me so profoundly that I could not resist going round to the stage-door (by no means a habit of mine) to assure myself that the representative of the " beautiful Austrian " was still in the flesh. I waited some twenty minutes in the crowd, and when Madame Ristori came out we raised a cheer. She passed quite close to me. How different the expression of the face—what I could see of it—now! She was smiling and bowing graciously as she passed to her carriage; and I felt so happy and excited at seeing her again (bereft, not of head

but only of her abundant white locks) that I could have almost wept for joy.

I am grateful, I repeat, to have had the privilege of seeing Ristori—the greatest tragic actress that the Italian stage ever brought forth. It is interesting at this distant date to recall the idiosyncrasies of her period and style; to note the immeasurable stretch of the contrast between her methods and those of her distinguished countrywoman, Eleonora Duse, the realist *par excellence* of her art. It is wellnigh impossible to compare the two women. But if Duse gave us life as we know and see it, Ristori in her way was equally glorious. She was the last great representative of a school that laid stress upon beauty of tone and variety of inflection in speech; upon perfect balance and elegance of delivery; upon breadth of detail in the delineation, yet with no lack of subtlety in the finer touches.

Luckily for me, the shipping merchant in whose office I worked at Liverpool was an enthusiastic musical amateur. He had a capital bass voice and sang Mozart and Schubert rather well. I used to play the piano accompaniments for him, and this gave me opportunities for practice of which I was only too glad to avail myself. I also joined a small dramatic and musical society, whose weekly meetings made an exceptional appeal to me, because they were devoted not only to choral practice but to performing short comedies and farces.

Besides being a means of recreation, the activities of this little society were for me something in the nature of a safety-valve. It was good to be singing in a choir (my voice had by this time settled into an agreeable light tenor), but it was even better to be enjoying the wild excitement of imitating Toole in *The Spitalfields Weaver* and Jefferson

(of Rip Van Winkle fame) in *Lend me Five Shillings*. I was no longer pining for the stage, but I was still revelling in the "traffic" of it, mere amateur though I was; and I honestly confess that the applause of my new Liverpool friends, not to speak of the kindly words of praise in our powerful local papers, made me feel as if my histrionic ambitions were really being satisfied. Yes, I had found a good safety-valve.

One afternoon, as I was walking up Church Street, I saw a familiar figure going into the Adelphi Hotel. But for the violin-case that he was carrying, I do not think I should have readily recognized in the streets of Liverpool my brother Max's teacher, Herr Louis Ries, the well-known second violin of the Monday "Pop" Quartet. But he it was, and as he shook hands he remarked, "This is very strange. Max told me only yesterday that you were here, and said as a joke that if I saw you I was to give you his love. I laughed, but forgot to ask him for your address. Yet, you see, here we are. And now I must try to get you a seat for the concert to-night."

This was indeed an unexpected treat. I had of course heard about the visit—an annual one—of the famous "Pop" Quartet, and my humble shilling had been ready for a squeeze into the gallery of the Philharmonic Hall. But to be taken by one of the gifted "Four" was something to be proud of, especially as I had been told by my brother that as a teacher Herr Ries was a rather severe disciplinarian. The most striking feature about him, I had always thought, was his remarkable resemblance to Beethoven, particularly when he was playing—leaning forward a trifle towards his desk with his lips pinched tightly together, his brows knitted, his thick hair sweeping straight back from his forehead. And then, had not his

father, Ferdinand Ries, been the great companion and friend of Beethoven in his declining days of deafness ?

That night at the Liverpool Philharmonic (how I blessed its perfect acoustics!) I listened for the first time to Joachim, Ries, Zerbini and Piatti in one of Beethoven's " Rasoumowsky " quartets and (with Agnes Zimmermann) the magnificent piano quintet of Schumann. The pianist was heard alone in Beethoven's sonata in C major, No. 2, and the " King of violinists," as everyone then called him, gave for a solo some unaccompanied Bach, as he alone could. To write out this programme once more is in itself a pleasure for the sake of what it recalls—something beyond the mere repetition of familiar and far-distant clichés—something that to me was at once a revelation and the foreshadowing of a life of great music to come.

A few weeks later (in the spring of 1874) I had a letter from home telling me that my mother was seriously ill. My father asked me to return as soon as I could, and, if possible, to make arrangements for remaining permanently in London.

I lost no time in carrying out the parental behest, but for every reason I said good-bye to Liverpool with sincere regret. My work there had been of an exacting nature, but I had learnt a great deal relating alike to business, art, and life in general. I had grown fond of the town and the friends I had made there. I had loved to watch the swift, strong tides of the broad Mersey as they swept along the Prince's Pier, bringing with them the fresh, salt air from New Brighton and beyond the Cheshire Hills. I had gazed, too, with wide-open eyes at the splendid steamers, the " greyhounds of the Atlantic," owned by the Cunard, the

Inman, and the Guion lines, then as now excelling one another by turns in the race for size and speed.

My twenty months had been full of interest, and I felt sad at the parting, without reckoning the extra tug at my heart when I thought of the trouble that lay before me at home. There was a lump in my throat as I passed St. George's Hall, with its glorious organ, and entered the Lime Street Station on my way to Euston.

# CHAPTER IV

## 'STARS" OF THE 'SEVENTIES

London Once Again—I Study with Manuel Garcia—Singing *plus* Dancing —My Journalistic Infancy—A " London Letter "—Michau's Re-entry and his Advice—*Ergo,* " Become a Critic "—Début of Salvini—His Othello and Kean's compared—The *Operatic and Dramatic Album* —Editor and Critic at 21—Pictures and Biographies at a Premium— Letters from Henrietta Hodson, John Clayton, Ben Terry and Charles Warner—Interview with Adelaide Neilson—Garcia decides for Journalism—The Webster Benefit: Helen Faucit as Lady Teazle; a Great *School for Scandal* Cast—Exit Michau: His Last Letters.

ON arriving in London I found, to my intense relief, that my mother was out of danger. It would, however, be some time before she could leave her bed, and perhaps weeks before she would be fit to resume her professional duties. It was in the performance of these that I was expected to be of help, in conjunction with her new assistant, Miss Loveder—plain " Loveder," without the Miss, as we usually called that lovable creature.

The prospect was not exactly thrilling. Teaching dancing was not an occupation that appealed to me much more than the shipping business. (Like Desdemona, I saw myself faced with a " divided duty." Desdemona had Biblical authority for cleaving to her husband; I felt no less divinely bound to " honour " my mother.) The awkwardness of the financial situation was aggravated by the fact that the parental dwelling had recently been transferred from Princes Street to a large house at the corner of Bentinck Street and Welbeck Street. So far as I was concerned, there was no time to be lost.

To tell my life-story over again from this point would incur a task beyond the scope of this book. I shall merely endeavour to avoid repetition. Manuel Garcia, at the date of my return, was installed on the ground floor of the Bentinck Street House. It was quickly decided that I should combine vocal study under the great teacher with the direction of as many of my mother's classes as I could undertake. In this way she hoped, good soul, to enlarge her own *clientèle*, with her eldest son as a partner, whilst ensuring my chances as a singer should I prove good enough for a public career.

I was now eighteen. I had been a "rolling stone" long enough to feel a desire to settle down. I had given up the idea of becoming an actor, and for my mother's sake I threw myself seriously into the arduous duties of her profession. Over-young for it I certainly was; yet no protests were forthcoming on that score from mothers of families or headmistresses of young ladies' schools.

Indeed, things were quite flourishing when, in the autumn of 1874, my mother recovered sufficiently to get into harness again. That enabled me to "go more lightly" on the dancing and devote increased time to vocal practice. I was receiving two or three lessons a week from Garcia, besides studying harmony with a Norwich friend, A. H. Thouless, who, like the old *maestro*, was a professor at the Royal Academy. Such was the state of affairs when, towards the end of the year, I undertook my first job as a journalist and Bizet Michau quitted the old city in the Eastern Counties to live in London once more.

Whilst in Liverpool I had occasionally sent to the *Norwich Argus* a "par." describing some new Atlantic liner on its first arrival in the Mersey. This had kept me

in touch with my Uncle Philip, but otherwise the idea of journalistic work as a regular occupation had never entered my mind. I had, however, always followed with close interest one feature of the Liverpool papers that was not to be found either in the metropolitan dailies or in the *Norwich Argus*—I mean the "London Letter." The question now occurred to me, Why not suggest to my uncle to let me provide one? He was quite willing.

My "London Letter"—political, social, literary, scientific and artistic—was liked. I forget now the exact reason why it was discontinued, but after a few months of what was really capital practice it had to stop. I was, nevertheless, to maintain my connexion with the *Argus* for many years, especially as to the Norwich Festivals, which I first criticized in 1875. Otherwise I had yet to make my real plunge into what the late Sydney Grundy called the "vortex of journalism."

The reunion with Bizet Michau and the advice that he gave me during our many talks at Bentinck Street marked a definite turning-point in my career. He had known me half my life. He could give me the benefit of his long experience. He nourished many prejudices; but, to counterbalance them, he had an abundant stock of common sense. His life had been largely spent in the atmosphere of art, of the theatre, and in some degree of music. Both in Paris and London he had been acquainted with prominent journalists. One day, after we had weighed all the pros and cons, he delivered himself, in his usual emphatic, staccato manner:

"When a young man in your position has the choice of three or four professions, the question is, which does he like best, or which is he most adapted for? We need

not stay to consider acting; you would have liked it, but, after all, you have shown no particular genius for it. Again, you are teaching dancing to help your mother. You can earn a good living at it; but you hate it, and I don't blame you. I was a fool to stick to it myself. You are studying singing because you have a voice, because you have a great master, and because you love it—three very good reasons. But you may have to wait a long while before you can make money at it.

"Well," he went on, "you have to take the chance. Whether you ultimately become a singer or not, you will have learnt your art under a celebrated teacher and it will always be an asset. Meanwhile, my boy, it is an undoubted fact, apart from your inclinations, that singing and dancing do not go well together as studies, whatever they may do on the stage. The leg-work wearies your body and unfits you for vocalism."

"I have found that out already," I admitted.

"But what are you going to do for a living in the meantime? If you can't or won't teach dancing, what are you going to do to earn money? Roderigo, 'put money in thy purse.'" (This with a Kean-like attitude, followed by a brief silence.) Then Michau resumed:

"There remains journalism. You are fond of writing, and you can make a little at it from the start. You are earning only the veriest trifle now, I know; but try to get on a London paper—you will soon make it worth while."

I interrupted him: "Not unless I can obtain an appointment on a regular staff, and I have not the time to spare for that whilst I am teaching and studying. It depends, too, upon what branch of journalism I am to go in for."

"Can there be any question? A man who writes for

the papers is most useful—and most readable—when he writes about the subjects that he understands. Candidly speaking, this 'London Letter' that you are sending to the *Argus* doesn't begin to interest me very much until you arrive at the theatrical and musical part. There you seem to be at home; whereas the politics and the rest of it betray 'the hand of irresponsible youth.' Now, boy, if you really want my advice, specialize in what you know most about."

"You mean that in my nineteenth year I am to pose before some respectable editor as a dramatic or musical critic, or both? I fear I am not yet equal to the job."

"Perhaps not. But you soon will be. If you have your standard you only need the ability to apply it, to express yourself and state your opinions. You know enough already to criticize singers and players. What you cannot yet do is to write with authority about the music that they perform. You must be able to judge new works. Isn't that so?"

"Precisely," I said. "With the 'classics' I seem to know where I am; but, for example, this new music of Wagner's puzzles me dreadfully. Some of it sounds beautiful; some of it I cannot make head or tail of. His opera *Lohengrin* is to be performed at Covent Garden this season for the first time in London, and though I have heard at the 'Proms.' bits of it that I admire immensely, still I cannot tell how I shall like it as a whole."

"Don't worry till you have heard it. New ideas are never accepted without hesitation. It has always taken time for a fresh type of genius to assert itself and become recognized. And now, hear all the good music you can; see all the good pieces, all the good acting you can. Study the technique of criticism, the history of music, the lives of the great composers and great artists, the accounts of famous actors and the art of acting. That will give you plenty to

do for a year at least, and by the end of that time you ought really to be qualified to start work as a professional critic." Sensible, sanguine old friend! I followed his advice to the letter.

Michau was my companion on the occasion of an historic theatrical event, namely, the début at Drury Lane (in March, 1875) of the renowned Italian tragedian Tommaso Salvini. I was curious to see what the old dancing-master would think of a man who came with the reputation of being the greatest actor of his epoch. For nothing would persuade Michau to share the prevailing opinion about Henry Irving, whose style was not orthodox enough to please him. (He thought his Hamlet clever, thoughtful, and picturesque, but neither dignified nor impressive.)

He was anticipating that Salvini's Othello could never possibly satisfy him after that of his idol, Edmund Kean. Still, he was too honest and fair to make up his mind beforehand. I was glad not to be similarly troubled, for I had never seen a really fine Othello. (Edwin Booth had not yet come over from America and given those splendid performances at the Lyceum, when he alternated the parts of Othello and Iago with Irving.) On the other hand, I had seen Ristori act and had now learnt some Italian. Michau's real advantage lay in the fact that he knew the text of *Othello* by heart.

The excitement in the theatre as the audience assembled was quite out of the ordinary. Many literary as well as theatrical, musical and "art" celebrities were present; and, as I looked down at the stalls from the front row of the dress circle, one of the first whom I pointed out to Michau was the poet Robert Browning, who was subsequently to become Salvini's most intimate English friend.

I did not see Irving, nor do I think he was there. Actors and actresses were not then in the habit of spending their spare afternoons or evenings in the theatre, as they do nowadays. (Nor was it their custom, if they did go, to acknowledge "receptions" from pit and gallery when they took their seats; indeed, the receptions were not forthcoming.) However, this was distinctly an interesting audience, and the whole battalion of dramatic critics, from John Oxenford and Clement Scott to Joseph Knight, Moy Thomas and Isaac Seaman, were of course present in force.

Such enthusiasm had never before been aroused by a foreign actor in an English theatre. Browning displayed the utmost excitement; so did calm old stagers like Edmund Yates, Henry Labouchere, James Whistler and Frederic Leighton. After the scene where Othello hurls Iago to the ground and nearly strangles him, the pent-up excitement broke forth. I thought the cheering would never cease. It was at this point that Michau gave vent to his long-suppressed feelings. As the curtain fell he stood up and launched forth a mighty series of "bravos!" Then, when the recalls had ended and the applause had died down, he tumbled back in his seat and exclaimed, "Mon Dieu! I had never dreamt of such an Othello as this!"

From first to last it was a revelation—a sublime creation, from the love-making of the first act to that terrible moment when the Moor, using the unfamiliar gesture of an African, drove the dagger into his jugular vein and hacked it across his throat until it seemed that his head must fall off. Never had suicide so realistic or so terrible been witnessed upon the stage. But when all was said and done, it was not by any means the brute force of the impersonation that impressed most deeply. On our way home Michau took my arm and made the comparison that I was waiting for:

"This Salvini is truly marvellous. I could never have imagined an Othello so utterly different from Edmund Kean's, and yet so magnificent. Kean in his anger and jealousy was often incoherent; he rushed about the stage like a ferocious wild animal. But he was, in reality, less terrifying than this Italian. I never saw such paroxysms of concentrated rage, such glances, such gestures. Salvini reminds me of a lion of the desert, and yet he is as dignified and noble as a hot-blooded nature's gentleman can be. In my opinion, he comes nearer than Kean did to the type of man that Shakespeare drew. What a grand voice! How beautifully he declaims every line! How musical his language sounds! And what a passionate lover!"

As Hamlet, in which part we also saw Salvini together, Michau admired him less; while the critics, too, admired his rival, Rossi, more. Oddly enough, the actor with whom Salvini most feared comparisons in this rôle was not Rossi but Irving. He hesitated a long while before playing it here. To an English journalist he once thus confided his fears:

"How could I, a stranger, in a foreign language, to an unknown public, dare to interpret that masterpiece of the divine Shakespeare in competition with the greatest among the living English actors? I took a box to see Irving undisturbed, but arrived too late for Hamlet with the shade of his father. Irving in the scene with the courtiers I can only call sublime, and at the end of the second act I said, 'Mapleson [who was his manager in England] can do and say what he likes, but I will never represent Hamlet here!'" It seems, however, that as the play proceeded Salvini found the English actor "mannered and deficient" in those passages where a depth of passion should have been

revealed, and he ended by exclaiming, "Hamlet I also can do and I will!"

At the close of Salvini's engagement his impresario, Mapleson, records: "I handed him £8,000 for his half-share of the profits, retaining a like amount for myself." It was the same story each time he visited London. Salvini always played to crowded houses, and he created no less sensation in modern plays such as *Il Gladiatore* and *La Morte Civile* than in the tragedies of Shakespeare. He enjoyed the friendship of the Prince of Wales (King Edward), and was wont to declare that Robert Browning "treated him like a brother." I met him only once, and then his old-world grace and courtesy won my heart. I regard that meeting as a precious memory; for beyond any question Salvini was the greatest actor of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

I worked exceedingly hard during the first three years (1874-77) that I was studying under Garcia, for during that period I taught dancing on an average six hours every day; moreover I wrote occasional articles and did odd bits of journalism. I read a good many books on music; my father gave me a brand-new copy of Hawkins's "History of Music"; I worked with Thouless on Macfarren's "Harmony"; I sought out a rare volume now and then in the library of the British Museum; and, in addition, I lost no opportunity of going to the opera and the theatre or of attending good concerts whenever possible. I was determined to serve a faithful apprenticeship; nor did the Norwich Festival of 1875 and the Handel Festival of 1877 find me unprepared to fulfil my critical functions for the *Argus* in creditable fashion.

The over-pressure induced by these various activities

was relieved as by degrees I managed to free myself from the duties of my mother's profession. She had grown fairly strong again, and was now reconciled to the belief that I should not long help her to "carry on." So I remained at hand to aid in the supervision of the evening classes and balls, but the rest of the work she gradually took over herself, with Loveder and a second assistant to support her. The summer vacation of 1877 saw me entirely released from what Michau used to term my "Terpsichorean burden"; and then in the autumn came my first real journalistic chance.

Messrs. Matthews & Co., a firm of engravers in Oxford Street, had just started a monthly publication called the *Operatic and Dramatic Album*, the feature of which was a series of lithographs of celebrities cleverly drawn on stone from photographs. The idea was a good one in an age when picture papers were unknown, when portraits appeared only in the *Illustrated London News* or the *Graphic*, and when the only theatrical photographers worthy of mention were the London Stereoscopic Company, W. & D. Downey, Mayall, and Elliott & Fry. The drawings in the *Album* were thought well worth keeping at a period when everything in the nature of a "likeness" was expected—detestable custom!—to be framed and stuck upon the wall. But there had been one serious omission. So far the *Album* had contained nothing whatever in the way of text.

I pointed this out one day to Mr. Matthews when I went into his shop to order some cards. He informed me that letterpress had not been thought requisite. As a matter of fact, they had just disposed of the *Album* to a retired military officer, Major-General Le Poer Trench, who was at that moment in an upstairs room, if I would like to

go and speak to him. I duly interviewed the general, and half an hour later left the building bearing with me my appointment to the proud post of sole editor, literary contributor, and manager of the *Operatic and Dramatic Album*. Not so bad, I thought, for a young man of twenty-one.

I took to my new and responsible duties with ease as well as gratification. It was no small thing to start work as a London journalist in an "editorial chair," however modest its proportions. The *Album* had sufficient space at disposal for brief monthly notices of the more important musical and theatrical events, in addition to short biographies of the four artists (two in each branch) whose pictures appeared. With these interesting personages I began forthwith to come into contact; and the fact that no charge was made for inserting their portraits in the *Album* enabled me to feel, and indeed to assume, a beneficial air of independence.

It will hardly be believed to-day, I dare say, that my main difficulty lay, not in the choice of celebrities, but in the amount of persuasion that was often necessary to induce them to have a photograph taken—nay, even to lend me one. Most of these unsophisticated "stars" did not want to be advertised. They did not mind whether it cost them anything or not; they did not wish the public to see what they looked like in private life, and if the public desired to see them "in character" they could gratify that wish by coming to the theatre! What a contrast to the era of films and kinema-shows and newspaper pictures that "feature" the whole world, from kings and queens and presidents down to humblest hero (or criminal) of the moment!

I have mentioned somewhere how a famous burlesque

actress, the inimitable Nelly Farren, positively refused to give me a line for her biography; while another popular lady of the stage, Miss Ada Cavendish, would fain have withheld her photo, on the ground that "no one could possibly be interested to see it." I have lately come across a letter from Miss Henrietta Hodson—another talented actress, then not long married to Mr. Henry Labouchere of *Truth*—which further illustrates the point:—

Queen's Theatre, Long Acre.
*January 11th*, 1878.

Dear Sir,—I regret to say I have no photographs of myself. I have not had any taken for several years. Any of the old ones still existing are so bad that I should not like them to be published. With many thanks for your offer, believe me, yours sincerely,

Henrietta Hodson.

There were at the same time not a few "celebrities" who responded with welcome courtesy and celerity to my request to appear in the *Album*: for example, Henry Irving, Hermann Vezin, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, William Farren, Henry Neville (now my friend—whom I had seen act at the Adelphi with Teresa Furtado), Carl Rosa, William Terriss, Charles Warner, John Clayton, Minnie Hauk, Giuseppe del Puente, Marion Terry, George Henschel, David James, and Thomas Thorne (who "sat" with the other members of the cast of *Our Boys* for a special group on the occasion of the one-thousandth performance of H. J. Byron's immortal comedy), and many more.

Among the actors just named I saw a great deal at one time of John Clayton, a delightful companion and valued friend.* He had a rich, deep-toned voice, capable

* John Clayton, whose real name was Calthrop, was the father of three talented sons—Dion Clayton, Donald and Ion Calthrop.

of expressing intense feeling, and was an extremely fine actor. He woke to find himself famous on October 19th, 1875, the morning after the production of *All for Her*, in which his romantic delineation of Sydney Carton created a profound impression. The author of this adaptation from Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities" was our old Norwich neighbour, T. Palgrave Simpson, who gave us a box for the first night. Later I received from John Clayton the following "autobiographical" letter:

56, Hogarth Road, Earl's Court, S.W.
*April* 16, 1878.

Dear Mr. Klein,—I went upon the stage in my twenty-first year, on the 27th of February, 1866, at the St. James's Theatre, appearing as Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer*—my first attempt upon any stage—having had no provincial training or previous knowledge of the stage.

The first character that received any critical attention was the Earl of Mount-Forestcourt in T. W. Robertson's comedy of *Dreams*, produced at the Gaiety on the 27th March, 1869.

I think the next important step I made was caused by my performance of Joseph Surface at the Vaudeville on the 18th July, 1872. This part I played about 400 nights.

As I had no opportunity of acting any part requiring strong passion, emotional and pathetic power, melodramatic, bordering on the tragic, and as I could get no one to believe that the strong melodramatic characters were what I could do better than any other range of character, I took a benefit at the Gaiety in the afternoon, on the 14th Dec., 1872, and introduced a play called *Awaking*, in which there was a part needing all these requirements.

It was very successful, and Mr. Bateman seeing it, engaged me for the Lyceum. There I was given nothing to do, so went into the country in September, 1874, with Miss Bateman (Mrs. Crowe), and acted Macbeth, Claude Melnotte, etc.

Believing that strong drama was my forte, I carried from manager to manager for three or four years a tragic drama called *All for Her*,

but could not arrange for its production. At last, on the 18th October, 1875, as a last resource, Mr. Horace Wigan allowed me to play it at the Mirror Theatre, now the Duke's or the Holborn, I don't know which.

I played Hugh Trevor in *All for Her* in London and the country about 500 or 600 times, and, after finishing with it in Brighton last December, I began my present part in *Diplomacy* on the 12th January of this present year.*

Can I tell you anything more? I've always worked very hard, have had to struggle for opportunity, being condemned sometimes for a year together to appear as "old men" in very unimportant characters, but took lessons in everything connected with the stage, and worked and worked and worked!—Yours faithfully,

JNO. CLAYTON.

The following characteristic letter I received from Mr. Ben Terry, the father of the gifted Terry family, in reply to my request for a portrait and biography of Miss Marion Terry.

32, Cambridge Gardens, North Kensington.
15.1.78.

DEAR SIR,—The Misses Kate, Ellen, Marion and Florence Terry are sisters.

Mr. Edward Terry (the actor) is in no way related to them.

Their brothers, four in number,† are, with the exception of the youngest, all engaged in commercial pursuits. Neither of them have at any time evinced any taste for the dramatic profession.

* The famous revival of Sardou's play (by the Bancrofts at the Haymarket), always memorable for the great scene between the three men, in which Clayton was associated with W. H. Kendal and Sir Squire (then Mr.) Bancroft.

† In granting me permission to print the above interesting letter, Mr. Fred Terry has pointed out a slight error on the part of his father: "He was a dear old fellow and a very courteous gentleman, and I'm very proud of being his son. But I'm his fifth son! Being only 14 years old and at school at Geneva in 1878, I suppose I didn't count! And, by the way, you might mention that my mother's maiden name was Sarah Ballard, not Sarah Yerrett, as given in my sister Ellen's 'Memoirs.' She also was such a wonderful woman that I think I was 'doubly blessed' in having such parents."

Both my wife and I were on the stage for many years. I was with Charles Kean during the whole of his memorable management at the Princess's Theatre, and previous to that Mrs. Terry and I were connected with the principal provincial theatres for many years, and were there associated with Macready, Helen Faucit, Mr. and Mrs. Kean, Vandenhoff, Gustavus Brooke, Mrs. Stirling, etc. etc.

I don't know whether this may in any way be at all interesting to you, but I have alluded to these circumstances in connection with my daughters' predilection for, and subsequent connection with, the Drama.

Miss Marion Terry was born in London. And now, having endeavoured to give you such information as you have requested, I am sorry to add I have no photograph of my daughter Marion as Dorothy except the one enclosed—and I must therefore ask you to be good enough to return it to me at your earliest convenience.

I may add that after Charles Kean's management I was with the Alfred Wigan management at the St. James's Theatre, since which time I have been, and am now, in a very excellent and lucrative position in the Grand Junction Water Works Co. I am afraid I have said more of myself than I intended, but I have drifted into a lengthened statement unintentionally.

Don't forget the photo, and believe me, in haste, yours faithfully,

BEN TERRY.

Also this note from Charles Warner:

(Undated) Avon Villa, Lorne Gardens, Regent's Park.

MY DEAR SIR,—I was born at Kensington in 1846 and educated at Dr. Byng's, Westbury College. After leaving school I was placed with my uncle, an architect, with a view to following that profession. I ran away and took an engagement in a small provincial town as "Utilitarian," where I remained learning my profession.

I made my London début in 1864, in *Romeo and Juliet*, at the Princess's. Mr. Chatterton offered me a three years' engagement

at Drury Lane, which I accepted, in 1866. Joined Olympic Company, 1870; Lyceum, 1872; Vaudeville, 1874.

I trust you will find enough data to answer your purpose.—Yours truly,

CHARLES WARNER.

There was also a famous English actress—to wit, the beautiful Adelaide Neilson—whose name I have reserved for separate mention because my connexion with the *Album* enabled me once to interview her. It was in her dressing-room at the Haymarket Theatre, after one of her final appearances there in 1878 as Juliet. I had previously seen this singularly gifted actress as Amy Robsart in the spectacular drama of that name adapted from Sir Walter Scott's "Kenilworth"; also in Chatterton's subsequent production of *Ivanhoe*, wherein her Rebecca, like her Amy Robsart, was thought to be ideal. One could never forget her lovely, delicately-moulded face, her large lustrous eyes, her expressive mouth, her sympathetic and appealing voice; nor fail to admire her perfect grace, her noble poise of carriage, attitude, and gesture.

Adelaide Neilson conquered all hearts, in whatever part she appeared. But beyond a doubt her greatest delineation was Juliet. In that she stood alone. At the outset she presented a glorious picture of Shakespeare's Italian heroine, entrancing to look upon, the embodiment of maidenly innocence and charm. Then came a marvellously graduated crescendo of Southern passion, as the Veronese damsel blossomed under Romeo's magic influence into mature womanhood. Her balcony scene was famous as a model of faultless elocution and unaffected grace; and it was in this that her public loved her most. She could thrill you as no one else did with the intensity of her emotion and the poignant beauty of her voice in the potion scene. That she made, perhaps, the climax of

the tragedy, superb as she was also in the majesty of the final episode. Yet it was always for " Miss Neilson in the Balcony scene " that people clamoured at benefit performances and so forth. I saw her in it many times and never found her treatment of it exactly the same. The variety of her art was extraordinary; for hers were the varied moods of a born genius.

When I entered her gas-lit dressing-room at the Haymarket (no dazzling glare from a hundred naked electric bulbs in those days), Miss Neilson was still resplendent in the white satin and pearl ornaments worn by Juliet in the tomb of the Capulets. I noted at once how little her radiant beauty owed to the pigments of ordinary stage " make-up." Lips, eyelids and nostrils just tinged with colour; comparatively little rouge on the cheeks; powder ever so lightly touched on over the " body-colour " ; no vivid hues anywhere to withstand the powerful beams of modern stage-lighting. Seated in a large easy chair and smiling graciously as she extended her hand to me, she made a lovely picture such as Titian or Velasquez would have revelled in transferring to canvas.

I was feeling horribly nervous, but contrived to voice the little set speech I had prepared—to tell her how proud I was to be received by her, and how doubly proud I should be if she would permit me as a favour (yes, a great favour in those days!) to publish her portrait in the *Operatic and Dramatic Album*. She asked : " What kind of picture do you want ? Do you mean something that I should have to sit for ? I fear I should scarcely have time to do that."

I assured Miss Neilson that it would not be necessary. A photograph was all that would be needed by our artist to draw on stone a perfect likeness of her. She looked

ADELAIDE NEILSON AS JULIET

somewhat relieved, but not entirely satisfied, as she went on:

"I am not much in favour of this new idea of advertising oneself by publishing one's portrait. I know there are now plenty of actresses who do it, but that does not really influence me."

My reply was to the effect that it would be difficult to walk along any important London street without being attracted by a large, highly-coloured poster depicting "Miss Neilson as Juliet."

"But that is the manager's affair," she retorted, "and I am not responsible for it. It always reminds me of one of those vast, ugly daubs representing the 'Queen of Tragedy' that you see hanging outside Richardson's Show at the country fairs." An answer to this was obvious, but I preferred to join in her hearty laughter at the notion. Then, growing serious once more, she continued:

"Well, I have looked at the copy of the *Album* which you sent me, and if you will promise that it shall be really and truly *like* me—not one of those stupid flattering pictures, I mean—you may go to the Stereoscopic Company and ask them for my photograph as Amy Robsart. I think it is the best I have had taken."

Promising that she should see a proof of our drawing, I thanked her for receiving me so courteously and took my leave. I had barely got into the street when I recollected that I had not breathed a word about the accompanying biography. I dared not go back, however, and next day, fortunately, my friend Austin Brereton supplied me with all the requisite material.

I remained in charge of the *Album* until its "death." It had never proved a paying investment, and after a few

months of vain striving the General was fain to cry "Hold, enough!" To me it had served as a useful stepping-stone, and I was feeling equipped for criticism of a more onerous description when James Mallett, the editor of a rising City paper, offered me a regular salary to write musical and dramatic notices. This kept me busy on the *Citizen* from 1878 until 1880, during part of which period I also acted as musical critic of the *Examiner*, a famous but unfortunately moribund weekly, similar in character to the *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review*.

It was this increase of profitable journalistic labour that compelled me to arrive at a definite decision regarding my vocal career. I put the case frankly to Signor Garcia, and he advised me without hesitation to give up the singing: "Your voice is not strong enough for opera; and as you do not care for concert work, why take the risk of exchanging the stalls for the stage? You have studied with me—how long?—four years; well, you know enough of singing to be able to write sanely about it, and that is more than can be said of some of the critics."

My parents and Michau were of the same opinion, with the additional argument that as a pupil of Garcia I should always be entitled, if I wished, to teach others the art of singing. (After a time I began taking private pupils, and succeeded so well that in 1888, at the request of Mr. Weist Hill, the Principal, I joined the professional staff of the new Guildhall School of Music.) Meanwhile at Bentinck Street, where I continued to live until 1881, it was my good fortune, although no longer a student, to see my old master almost daily, and he showed his warm affection for me in many ways. Then came the period of Manuel Garcia's second marriage, when he finally settled down at Cricklewood. There he continued to reside for another

quarter of a century, until he died on July 1st, 1906, at the splendid age of 101, the most remarkable and best-preserved centenarian that music has ever known.

Bizet Michau lived till he was nearly eighty, and his faculties, like Garcia's, remained clear and vigorous to the last. He loved above all to go to the theatre, though he invariably found fault with the acting. There were, however, two notable occasions that evoked no word of adverse criticism and left him speechless with delight. These were the never-to-be-forgotten "benefits" of Benjamin Webster and J. B. Buckstone at Drury Lane Theatre. The former consisted of a performance of *The School for Scandal*, with what was generally acknowledged to be "the cast of the century."

The "queue" had not then developed into a system. People stood outside the theatre in a compact mass, and squeezed in with a rush and a crush. In this instance the space for the five-shilling pit had been so reduced by the stalls that only half of the crowd could find seats. A fearful uproar ensued, and noisy shouts of "Where's the pit?" were heard till the curtain went up. Thenceforward to the end there was perfect silence, broken only by spontaneous outbursts of applause as favourite after favourite appeared or the act-drop fell. For every member of that "cast of the century" was a famous person. Let me dig up some of the names.

The Lady Teazle brought out from a long retirement the divine Helen Faucit (then the wife of Queen Victoria's friend and biographer, Sir Theodore Martin), an illustrious actress of the 'forties and 'fifties who, like Jenny Lind, had quitted the stage at the height of her glory. But what a survival! "Sacrebleu," I heard Michau swear under his

breath, "she has not changed a bit!" To me she looked like a girl, so fresh, so blooming, so delicate and refined. (No wonder, thought I, that Queen Victoria is fond of her and invites her to stay at Windsor!) Here, surely, was the Lady Teazle of one's dreams, in acting as well as in looks; a sparkling, bewitching, teasing beauty of the true Sheridan type; a lady from the tip of her lofty head-dress to the soles of her pretty feet; while, to make all perfect, her well-modulated, still youthful voice and musical laugh filled and enchanted the whole house. Such was Helen Faucit at the age of, I suppose, little under sixty.

That *grande comédienne* Mrs. Stirling was playing in virtue of her just renown as the finest Mrs. Candour of her day. She was then but little past her prime—an exponent rich and rare of all the qualities that went to the making of the old, full-flavoured school of English comedy, the ideal drawing-room gossip of the period. Did anyone ever sweep off the stage with the same suggestive "Who knows," etc., or the same significant glance as this Mrs. Candour gave, when she followed Maria from the room? And the Maria, who should *she* be but our own sweet, winsome Ellen Terry, almost at the outset of her career—as yet hardly more than a gifted and promising *ingénue!* The Lady Sneerwell of Mrs. Alfred Mellon was not less familiar and perfect in its way than the Mrs. Candour; the very artist for the part, with her acidulated tones and scornful banter.

Turning to the men, Samuel Phelps was the Sir Peter Teazle—convincing as usual in one of his finest characters. William Creswick as Joseph Surface was sound and impressive rather than subtle; but as Charles Surface the celebrated Charles Mathews, now well on in his seventies, was still the most amazingly juvenile and high-spirited of

*jeunes premiers*. To strengthen this unparalleled combination we had actors like William Farren, Henry Neville, Horace Wigan, Compton, Buckstone, Toole (as Moses) and a dozen more "stars" in other rôles. It was, moreover, a well-rehearsed performance, highly polished and brilliant in every detail; not merely a unique theatrical benefit, but the most brilliant of the many fine representations of *The School for Scandal* that it has been my privilege to witness.

Michau was particularly enthusiastic over the Screen scene. "Did you notice," he asked me, "how cleverly, how slowly but surely, they worked up the interest, without over-acting the climax when they arrived at it? That is where Charles Mathews is such an artist. He never exaggerates his laugh at Sir Peter's discomfiture and Joseph's disgrace, as so many Charles Surfaces have done. He is that rare thing, *mon cher*, a light comedian who does not forget he is a gentleman. Phelps was, of course, a fine Sir Peter; but he has too many mannerisms. Take it from me, the *clou* of the whole performance was the Lady Teazle. Did you ever see acting more natural, more exquisite, more inspired by the impulse of the moment? That was, if you like, 'holding the mirror up to nature,' just as Hamlet wanted it. And by the way, how glorious she used to be in her Shakespearean parts! What a sin to have taken her off the stage!"

Poor Michau! I fear the times for him were getting sadly out of joint. Once more he tired of London and went to live in the country, this time at Northam, near Southampton, where he quietly passed the remainder of his days. I used to hear from him occasionally, and his letters, ever cordial towards myself, were a strange mixture of the misanthropic and the humorous. In one he wrote:

I am a most melancholy beast at times. As to friendship, in everyday life it is but a name. As long as you give first-class dinners, can afford good wine and company, "poke up fire and laugh," you will have plenty of friends. Ask them to lend you money and . . . . There are three things I swear by: a true woman, a dog, and my purse—when it is full.

Again, some years later (1887):

You *know* I am peculiar in my tenets about acting. I think that Henry Irving (without wishing to take away any of his laurels) is no Shakespearean for me, but a purely melodramatic actor. He could never play Richard III or Shylock in a manner that would compare with my dear friend Edmund Kean; no, nor Macready, Gustavus Brooke, Phelps or Forrest, either. As Othello he could not, of course, "hold a candle" to Salvini. *In criticism it is only by comparison that we arrive at results.*

Finally, about a year later (undated), this:

*Un mot*, before I shake off my mortal coil. I shall be seventy-eight on the first of next January, and somehow I don't think we shall ever meet again. But, should you ever come to Southampton, recollect your old professor will receive you *à bras ouverts*. Although poor in my estate, I am rich in heart, and we will drink to your health and love to your family, such of them as still care for the old "Gaberlunzie." . . . In these days intellect, if not of a very high standard, is not well paid. As I once told a curate friend of mine, "You like to preach to a poor man, but before you do so, fill his belly!" Is it not so?—Always your sincere friend and well-wisher,—A. Hervé Bizet Michau.

# CHAPTER V

## CRITICISM FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Old Critics and New—Preparing for a Period of Transition: The Right Syllabus—Joseph Bennett the Critic and Ciampi the Buffo—The *Daily Telegraph* Libel Case—Editors and Musical Critics—The Youthful "G. B. S."—My Interview with "Labby"—The Author of "Music and Morals"—Writing for the *Examiner*—Sir Julius Benedict: His Concerts, Experiences and Views—Opera Singers, Foreign and Home-made—Carl Rosa: His First London Season—His Opinions concerning English Opera.

MY education as a musical critic was, I admit, rather of the practical, rough-and-ready order. Still, I have good reason for thinking it to have been neither better nor worse than that which was common to the period wherein I graduated as a musical journalist. Not until much later was a University training regarded as an essential preliminary for the young man who aspired to follow this branch of the profession. The musical critics of the 'sixties and 'seventies are nowadays dismissed with a smile as having been pleasantly naïve and comparatively incompetent. The succeeding generation—among whom I suppose I must count myself—were lucky (or unlucky) enough to be working through a period of much more radical, more drastic change. Were they better equipped to deal with the conditions?

I think that they were. Leaving out of the calculation the two or three belated elderly writers who carried some of their early prejudices with them to their graves (doing so as much perhaps through obstinacy as through conviction), it is a fact that the operas and orchestral works

dating from 1875 to 1900 which survive and are admired to-day, say from the production here of *Lohengrin* to the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*—received fair and impartial treatment at the hands of the London musical critics.

After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating; and, to employ a current definition, whether he was a "plain man" or a "specially-trained listener," that writer of the 'seventies or 'eighties who judged a new work upon its merits on first hearing, and delivered his judgment in clear, straightforward language, appraising the novelty at its true value on correct scientific grounds, not only knew what he was talking about, but knew sufficient for the proper execution of his duty.

The musical critics of my juvenile days were not accustomed to admit that they possessed shortcomings or weaknesses of any sort. They were sensitive as well as prosy, those "old fogies" of my youth; but their sensitiveness was mostly engendered by their *amour propre* and a lively consciousness of the dignity of their calling. Moreover, they seldom, if ever, condescended to attack each other in print, or play the game of "dog eat dog" in private.

I maintain that cultivated people were not a jot more ignorant about music then than they are to-day. The musical public is now larger and in the main better trained to listen with accurate appreciation, that is all. The crowds that stood by the hour on "classical" nights in the old well-packed promenade at Covent Garden knew enough, unquestionably, to understand and enjoy Beethoven symphonies and Wagnerian excerpts; though I admit they also applauded ballads in the second part of the programme. Whether they would have similarly revelled in Scriabin's

" Poème d'Extase " or Stravinsky's " Sacre du Printemps " I cannot say. Neither the " plain man " nor the trained critic was as yet prepared, mentally or physically, to " place " such things.

Even the wisest of critics can get into trouble through mischance or carelessness. Joseph Bennett, for many years the powerful musical critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, could be severe, but was never intentionally harsh or spiteful. Once, however, he wrote, in a notice of *Don Giovanni* at Covent Garden, that the Masetto, Signor Ciampi, was " no longer to be considered as a singer but a buffo." The statement sounded true, but the artist thought otherwise. He was of opinion that the observation was calculated to injure him in his profession, and immediately brought an action for libel against the publisher of the newspaper.

The case was tried in the old Nisi Prius Court at Guildhall, and by request of the late Lord Burnham (then Sir Edward Lawson) I appeared as a witness for the newspaper, together with one or two of my colleagues.* Signor Ciampi practically wept in the witness-box: " he had always been a singer and nothing but a singer, though admittedly a good comic actor." The *Daily Telegraph* criticism had, he considered, done him an immense amount of harm.

In his evidence for the defence Joseph Bennett admitted that, in connexion with what was otherwise a good per-

* This action was heard in the Queen's Bench Division at the Guildhall before Mr. Justice Wills and a special jury, on November 2nd, 1891. Sir Charles Russell, K.C., M.P. (afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen, L.C.J.), Mr. Charles Mathews, and Mr. Montague Lush appeared for the defence. The words complained of as being libellous were the following: " All the principal characters were in accustomed and competent hands, for though Mr. Ciampi—whose history belongs to the ancient history of Covent Garden Theatre as well as to the present time—cannot now be considered a singer, he deals with Zerlina's loutish lover according to the accepted humour of a true Italian buffo."

formance, he did not wish it to go out that he approved of the *singing* of Signor Ciampi, and had expressly conveyed the fact in the mildest way he could by intimating "that time had impaired his powers." My own testimony was to the effect that Mozart had intended Masetto to be a singing part, but that this artist no longer fulfilled its requirements as such, his voice now being too worn. (In fact, I had always regarded him as a buffo rather than an operatic vocalist.) In the end the plaintiff gained a verdict in his favour, but with one farthing damages. The judge thereupon refused to grant him his costs and added, "I think that this was so slightly over the line of legitimate criticism that the action ought not to have been brought." The general feeling in consequence was that "dear old Joe Bennett had been unlucky!"

The day of Chorley on the *Athenæum* had passed, and though James Mortimer, when he started his *London Figaro*, had strong dramatic writers (the brilliant Clement Scott, followed by the logical William Archer), he trusted his musical columns to the previously unknown Percy Betts ("Cherubino"), who was then an amateur at the business. Later, when Percy Betts went on the *Daily News*, he had earned his experience and developed into an excellent critic. It was in the mid-'seventies, when papers of the type of the *World* and *Truth* came into existence, that the character of musical and dramatic criticism on the prominent weeklies began to undergo the most striking change. Edmund Yates, the founder and editor of the *World*, discovered in William Archer a young man who could display literary finish in association with genuine critical acumen. But he surprised his readers still more when he appointed as his musical critic Mr. George Bernard Shaw

"G. B. S." did not fill the post for very long; but whilst he did he made his weekly column delightfully quaint and exciting. Not that his quips and jests and amusing personalities were equalled by any profundity or breadth of musical knowledge. Nor was there any superficial pretence at a display of such knowledge. "G. B. S." was frank and candid in those days, as he is now. The new-comer was an obviously gifted young man of my own age, made conspicuous at concerts by his extremely light red hair and skimpy beard; also by the fact that he rarely put on evening clothes and generally wore a tweed suit and a red tie.

As we met constantly, I quickly made Bernard Shaw's acquaintance and never failed to enjoy his conversation. But a great deal of the music to which we had to listen appeared to bore him intensely; indeed his "smashing" articles clearly revealed as much. It did not surprise me when he took an early opportunity of sending Mr. Yates his resignation. At heart, however, he has always remained a genuine lover of good music, and on that safe ground we have always been the best of friends. For the most original dramatist of our era I can feel none but the warmest admiration.

Not long after *Truth* had been started (whilst I was still editing the *Operatic and Dramatic Album*) I perceived that that rather sensational journal, which had achieved an instantaneous success, was as yet minus a musical critic. I decided to call upon Mr. Labouchere without delay and offer him my services. He received me politely, after I had waited half an hour in the outer office. With him was his able assistant-editor, Mr. Horace Voules, wearing his customary monocle; and a very smart, satirical gentleman

he was. "Labby," who looked particularly solemn, was then a man of about fifty, with a closely cropped beard that was just beginning to turn grey, and a notably saturnine cast of countenance. His voice sounded rasping and unpleasant as he asked me to sit down. I told him my business and he proceeded to question me:

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-two."

"How long have you been a critic?"

"Ever since I was a boy."

"You do not seem much more than a boy now. I mean, how long have you been writing about music on the press?"

"Three or four years."

"I am afraid that's not enough. You see, I have to engage only writers of experience for the staff of this paper. Our idea is to "hit out," and if a very young man does that there is always the risk that he may get us into trouble. I admit I know nothing about music, so our critic, without being too elderly, must be old enough to be trusted. Thank you very much for offering yourself for the post. Good day."

Shortly afterwards "Labby" engaged as musical critic a well-known Church of England clergyman, the Rev. H. R. Haweis, a friend of ours, who lived nearly opposite to us in Welbeck Street. He had recently made himself prominent by his fiery, eccentric sermons and his highly interesting musical services. He was extremely short and thin, very lame, in fact almost a cripple; but his attenuated frame enclosed a big heart, and a temperament so ardent that, when he shouted his sermons in a piping treble, leaning far over the cushion on his reading-desk, one used to fear lest he might overbalance and tumble

out of his pulpit. He achieved further notoriety as the author of the clever book entitled "Music and Morals." As a critic his writing betrayed more or less of the dilettante. He never acquired the formal professional touch of that other shrewd amateur, Percy Betts, who soon succeeded him on *Truth* and displayed in its columns for many years a remarkable *flair* for exposing musical frauds and abuses.

I was more fortunate on my second attempt to get on the staff of a serious weekly. It was in January, 1879, that I began writing for the *Examiner*, shortly after it had been purchased by Mr. E. d'Avigdor, eldest son of the benevolent Countess of that name, who belonged to the distinguished Jewish family of the Goldsmids. Mr. d'Avigdor edited the old journal himself; for he was a cultured man and a genuine art-lover. But he had not the patient spirit of his philanthropic mother, and used to threaten to cut down my space if I did not cultivate greater conciseness. I learned something by obeying his instructions.

During my Bentinck Street period I used frequently to enjoy a chat with another good friend and neighbour, Sir Julius Benedict, who lived round the corner in Manchester Square. I had to send to Norwich a full report of a function held at Dudley House, Park Lane, in the summer of 1875 (presided over by the Duke of Edinburgh), at which Sir Julius was presented with a service of silver to celebrate the jubilee of his residence in England. That event brought me more intimately to the notice of the veteran knight, who was then in his seventy-first year. On that afternoon, too, I encountered—rare picture of loveliness !—the Countess of Dudley, the most famous beauty of her day, leading her little son by the hand and

carrying her baby on her shoulder. Alas that those should not have been the days of kodaks and snapshots!

The sight of Benedict always reminded me that that amiable old gentleman, who now stooped so badly, had the glorious privilege, when he was only nineteen, of shaking hands with and talking to Beethoven! I might have further reflected (especially when he came to call on Garcia), "Behold the man whom Garcia's sister, Malibran, first advised to visit London; who went to America as pianist and accompanist with Jenny Lind; who conducted the performance of *Elijah* at Exeter Hall in 1848, when Jenny Lind made her actual début in oratorio; who has conducted the Norwich Festivals for thirty years and accompanied at the 'Pops' ever since they started; who was the pupil of Weber, and the composer of a couple of dozen cantatas and operas, including the evergreen *Lily of Killarney!*"

Despite his foreign birth—he was a native of Stuttgart—the people of my generation looked upon Benedict as an Englishman. He spoke fluently and with comparatively little accent. He had conducted English opera at Drury Lane under Bunn's management in the 'forties, and Italian opera at Her Majesty's under Mapleson in the 'fifties. As a conductor he compared unfavourably with his rival, Sir Michael Costa. On the other hand, Benedict was an admirable pianist, which Costa never was; and he retained the exquisitely delicate Weber touch until his eyesight became impaired by cataract and he could play and accompany no more. Even then he continued to teach at what was then considered the handsome rate of a guinea a lesson.

I went over to see him several times to discuss a series of articles which he wished me to write for the *Argus* in connexion with the *débâcle* which at that period threatened

the Norwich Festival. The series was carried out with beneficial results, and there was a slight improvement in 1878, the last Festival that Sir Julius conducted. Under his energetic successor, Alberto Randegger, the returning flow of prosperity gathered still greater impetus, and he was destined to live long enough—until June, 1885—to see his beloved old Festival safe upon its legs once again. But, whilst he was still laboriously conducting and his eyes were constantly getting weaker, the Norwich musical wits would repeat their well-worn joke: "Poor Sir Julius! He can't get the score into his head, so he puts his head into the score."

Benedict shared with William Kuhe the distinction of giving his annual London concert in partnership with Mr. Frederic Gye, who provided for the occasion the choicest stars of the Royal Italian Opera, and also the *locale*, an ugly annexe of Covent Garden Market called the Floral Hall, now the potato market. "Floral Hall Concerts" were given every Saturday afternoon during the season; but for the annual "benefits" the attractions were generally increased to Gargantuan proportions. For example, the singers in 1877 included such great artists as Adelina Patti, Marimon, Zaré Thalberg, Bianca Bianchi, d'Angeri, Scalchi, Albani, Nicolini, Capoul, Gayarre, Graziani, Cotogni, Maurel, and Bagagiolo—an amazing collection, with Vianesi, Bevignani, and Benedict at the piano. These concerts continued to be given until 1882.

I once drove home with Benedict after one of the Floral Hall Concerts, and our conversation turned upon singing, whereof at that time the illustrious foreigner not only gave the finest display, but contrived to take away the financial cream and leave little save skimmed milk for the native

vocalist. I could not refrain from expressing my admiration of the superb group of artists I had just been listening to. The tired veteran beside me sighed as he exclaimed:

"Yes, the pick of the world's great singers gather here for the London season. There seem to be so many of them that they leave no room for artists of the second class, whether English or not. Whom have we of our own that the public will pay to hear, except Sims Reeves, Santley, Edward Lloyd, Foli, Patey, Lemmens-Sherrington and one or two others? In opera they want only the old favourites because they find the new singers are not equally good. And I am bound to say they are right!

"I was present this morning at an *audition* at Covent Garden for an Italian opera tour in the provinces. We heard two or three Italians, a Frenchwoman, the remainder English. All had had stage experience, but none were known in London. Well, I never listened to a more characteristic third-class lot—singers, I mean, who were true to type. The Italians shouted; the Frenchwoman had a shocking *vibrato;* the English sang nicely, but with small voices. The foreigners, of course, were useless; but from sheer necessity we had to engage three of the native artists. They had all studied and sung in Italy, so perhaps they will do for our smaller-sized provincial theatres."

I ventured to suggest that it might be a good plan to give them a trial at Covent Garden first. Sir Julius smiled and shook his head sadly.

"Useless," he replied. "How can Mr. Gye place these inferior people side by side with the giants he has in his company? The subscribers would not stand them in the leading rôles, and to give them the smaller parts would do no good. Besides, at Covent Garden you cannot afford to disturb the regular *ensemble;* directly you have to

call extra rehearsals it leads to trouble, *et cela ne sert à rien*. But here we are at Manchester Square. Come in and have a cup of tea."

I am not altogether certain, but I think the tour that Sir Julius Benedict referred to was the one in which he took a half-share with the impresario, and lost so heavily over the transaction that it nearly broke his heart. After all, the fault was his own for entering upon such a speculation. Italian opera in the provinces was always at this period a risky enterprise, and Mapleson, who knew a great deal more about that branch of the business than Frederic Gye or his sons, had already scraped off whatever gilt there was upon the gingerbread.

But, at the very time that Benedict was uttering his remark in disparagement of "small English voices," an important operatic renascence was already in progress in a less exalted sphere—a campaign destined to change the whole history of English opera and fertilize anew the native soil where it had long ceased to flourish. I allude to the undertaking already originated in the provinces by Carl Rosa, a clever and energetic Hamburg violinist, then still in his thirties. He was best known here as the husband of Mme. Parepa, a talented and popular prima donna, who had died in 1874.

When Carl Rosa started his initial London season at the old Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street, in September, 1875, no easy task awaited him. Opera in the vernacular had long ceased to retain a semblance of the popularity it had enjoyed in the "palmy days" of the Pyne and Harrison troupe a dozen years or so before. Now the two Italian opera houses were monopolizing whatever affection the London public had to bestow upon the lyric stage

Foreign opera, sung in a foreign tongue by foreign singers, was still "the rage" to such an extent that Society could divide itself into opposing camps—Covent Garden and Her Majesty's—and yet be strong enough each to support an expensive troupe of its own.

But, although Carl Rosa knew this perfectly well, he never hesitated, once he had made up his mind, to risk the danger of "falling between the two stools." He simply said to Society, "I do not need you or your fashionable support. I will avoid your season altogether and see what London will do in the autumn." The result completely justified his temerity. Playing his trump-card at the outset, Carl Rosa gave Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* with Santley as Figaro and a capital all-round cast, and conducted it himself in masterly fashion. I sat in the dress circle, "proud as Punch," occupying a seat that Carl Rosa himself had given me, and enjoyed a performance of unforgettable beauty.

I first met Carl Rosa at the house of my cousin, Mrs. J. M. Johnson, in Northwick Terrace, Maida Hill. (She was a niece of my grandparents and had been for many years the intimate friend of Mme. Parepa-Rosa.) Rosa had light flaxen hair, wore a wavy beard and thick moustache, and spoke rapidly in a rather high-pitched voice with a decided German accent. When excited he gesticulated a good deal, and one could see that he was sensitive and quick-tempered; yet his twinkling eyes and bright laugh betrayed the kindly, sympathetic nature which the members of his company declared him to possess. He was talking to my cousin about *Lohengrin*, produced only three months previously in Italian for the first time in England.

"It is monstrous," he exclaimed, "that London should

not get its first hearing of an opera like *Lohengrin* (which really requires to be understood) in the language of the country! To my ear it sounds all wrong in Italian, just as the *Fliegende Holländer* did at Drury Lane five years ago. Mind you, if I were to try giving one of his (Wagner's) operas in English it would be *The Flying Dutchman*, because it is easier to sing, and at least people are familiar with the story." (A year afterwards he gave it at the Lyceum with Santley as Vanderdecken; but it was not until after the Wagner Festival of 1877 that he ventured to produce *Lohengrin* at Her Majesty's for the first time in English.)

"Slow but sure" was Carl Rosa's motto. The startling success of his first London season took everybody by surprise, yet it did not urge him to attempt any foolhardy or ill-considered extension of his enterprise. He was a musician and an artist as well as an impresario; a man of wide vision, with an unusual amount of business ability and discretion. His chief thought, when he had gained the public ear, was how best to retain it and guide it to the appreciation of higher things. I met him at the Johnsons' again one Sunday just before he started with his company for the provinces. I asked him what he thought of his reception in London.

"Delighted," was his reply; "but I want to give English opera here for at least six months in the year. What is the good of only four or five weeks? That does not allow the people time to convert opera-going into a habit or to prefer it when sung in their own language. Down to the present they have been too fond of 'ballad-opera.' I want a chance to improve their taste, and at the same time to help the native composer. For that reason I have given Frederic Cowen a commission to write me an opera on

the subject of *The Lady of Lyons*, which I shall bring out next year." *

"Do you think the public really cares for old plays dished up as operas, or, for that matter, operas made out of romantic novels? Look at Balfe's *Talismano*."

"That was given in Italian," snapped Carl Rosa. "I never heard of anything so preposterous. It was the best opera that Balfe wrote—miles ahead of *The Bohemian Girl*; but deliberately disguised under a foreign translation to suit Mr. Mapleson's company. Of course it was beautifully sung (1874) with such a cast as Nilsson, Tietjens, Trebelli, Campanini, and Del Puente. But it was utterly wasted. Take my word for it, opera in the future will have to be sung in the language of the people, and, what is more, the State will never subsidize opera until it is so sung."

"But will London ever give up its beloved Italian opera?"

"That is the question. Perhaps not for years to come. The love of it is too deeply rooted at present, and there you have the reason why I dare not come here except in the autumn, when the two big houses are closed. English opera may appeal to a somewhat different class of audience, but, after all, it includes numbers of people who also fill the gallery and amphitheatre stalls at Covent Garden and Her Majesty's. You will see, both Gye and Mapleson will work harder than ever because of my success at the Princess's. Already, I am told, Mr. Gye has two big cards up his sleeve for next season."

Carl Rosa had very clear ideas as to what was needed for the permanent establishment of English opera in this

* It is of interest to mention that in 1846 Mendelssohn, when in London, entered into an agreement with Chappell & Co. to write an opera on this subject; but his death in 1847 put an end to the contract.

country. He also achieved more towards the realization of those ideas than any operatic manager we have ever had. In the next chapter I will give a brief account of his work during the years that followed his initial London season. It will necessarily take in incidents connected with the lives of other prominent musical folk who flourished during the same period.

## CHAPTER VI

### DAWN OF THE NEW OPERATIC ERA

Carl Rosa's Crusade—Ensemble *v.* " Star " System—The Covent Garden Season of 1876—Wagner Sung in English—New Musical Critics—Dr. Francis Hueffer on *The Times*—Carl Rosa and Sir Augustus Harris Launch Out—New English Operas at Drury Lane—Hueffer as a Librettist—Goring Thomas's *Nadeshda*—Rosa's Premature Death—Verdi and his " Requiem "—Henry Irving's Sons—My First Trip Abroad—A Glimpse of Sarah Bernhardt—My Meetings with her.

THE tentative enterprise of Carl Rosa differed from those of his aristocratic Italian rivals in two important respects: (1) The latter depended for their harvest upon the " subscription " contributed by wealthy patrons and the " deal " of the Bond Street libraries—he did not ; (2) he expected to lose by his London season—they did not. Put in another way, the impresarios were working on their " native heath," whilst he was a foreigner seeking primarily prestige and advertisement for his provincial activities. Yet the fact remains that Carl Rosa exercised from the outset a far healthier influence upon the progress of operatic art in this country than either of his strongly-entrenched British opponents.

He began by demonstrating the value of operatic *ensemble* when the meaning of the term was scarcely realized. At Covent Garden and Her Majesty's the detestable " star " system was rampant ; individual brilliancy leapt to the eyes more readily than all-round excellence ; principal parts were superbly sung. But in spite of a huge Italian chorus, an efficient cosmopolitan

orchestra, an "experienced" ballet, and a luxurious *mise en scène*, the general representations too often betrayed lack of adequate rehearsal and unity of artistic endeavour.

These last essentials were precisely what Carl Rosa, sitting in his conductor's chair, keeping an eye on everybody and everything, was able to supply. Unlike Vianesi and Bevignani at Covent Garden or Sir Michael Costa at Her Majesty's, he refused to leave stage matters to the *régisseur*, but himself "took a hand" in whatever was being done. He introduced a personal element into the work. He imbued it with the forceful ideas of a single controlling mind, and so made his performances remarkable for consistency, smoothness, and polish. This set London talking of them as something new and delightful. One was not asked, "Have you heard Santley as Figaro?" but "Have you seen the Carl Rosa Company in *The Marriage of Figaro?*"

It must be remembered that no complete foreign troupe had yet paid a visit to London. No Meiningen company had yet arrived at Drury Lane to show us how to manage stage crowds. A solitary visit of the Comédie Française to the Gaiety during the war of 1870-71 was the only experience we had had, and that of course not an operatic one. From this standpoint, therefore, the Carl Rosa season could claim to be regarded as a genuine novelty.

The two leading houses were fighting each other "tooth and nail" from April till August. Mr. Gye's prospectus was always equivalent to a fair-sized booklet. Take for example 1876, when Carl Rosa gave his next London season at the Lyceum. The "two cards" that he had referred to as being "up Mr. Gye's sleeve" were

*Aïda* and *Tannhäuser*—both quite unknown here then. Both were duly produced, and the latter was performed no fewer than eight times, against *Aïda* five and *Lohengrin* only three.

I have in my possession a statement of the total work done at Covent Garden in this very busy season, in the handwriting of the principal conductor, Signor Vianesi. As evidence of the variety and extent of the activities then common to the "Royal Italian Opera," it affords some interesting particulars. The season consisted of eighty-three performances, seven concerts in the Floral Hall, and two performances and two concerts at the Alexandra Palace.

The following twenty-nine operas were given in sixteen weeks: *Les Huguenots*, *L'Africaine*, *Dinorah*, *L'Étoile du Nord*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Guglielmo Tell*, *Il Barbiere*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il Flauto Magico*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Aïda*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Faust*, *Romeo e Giulietta*, *Hamlet*, *La Favorita*, *Lucia*, *Don Pasquale*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Figlia del Reggimento*, *I Puritani*, *La Sonnambula*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Crispino e la Comare*, and *Martha*. Vianesi adds that he conducted twenty operas out of the twenty-nine, and fifty-eight performances out of eighty-three.

The chorus, consisting of thirty-two ladies and forty-two men, cost £140 weekly, "besides the expenses of the journeys to and from Italy, Russia, and Spain, which were paid by Mr. Gye." The orchestra was composed of seventy-six players, except in certain operas where the number was increased to eighty. It cost ordinarily £84 for each performance—no more! (To-day, I suppose these expenses would be at least trebled.)

What an extraordinary mixture this list of operas!

what an odd *mélange* of old and new schools! And yet, with the exception of a few, one would find them in the active repertory of any modern foreign opera house. Signor Vianesi was very proud of the achievement, and I should accord him greater credit for it had he not omitted from his statement the name of his colleague, Signor Enrico Bevignani.* To complete the record, I will give the names of the principal artists by whom the above operas were sung: Mesdames Adelina Patti, Zaré Thalberg, Bianchi, Marimon, D'Angeri, Smeroschi, Rosavalle, Emma Abbott, Proch, Scalchi and Emma Albani; MM. Nicolini, Carpi, Bettini, Maurel, Graziani, Cotogni, Bagagiolo, Ciampi, and Tagliafico.

Such were the Covent Garden repertory and personnel at the critical moment when Bayreuth was being inaugurated and the Wagner "craze" on the very eve of setting in, foreshadowing the dawn of a new era for opera and indeed for music generally in this country. For so much, at least, ought Frederic Gye to be remembered; whilst Mapleson, on the other hand, was now beginning to hold an extra autumn season either at Her Majesty's Theatre or at Covent Garden. The reader will, therefore, be able to form a fairly clear idea of the quantity of opera that was going on in London and the strength of the opposition against which Carl Rosa had to contend when he came in

* Vianesi was jealous of Bevignani because Patti insisted on the latter conducting most of the operas in which she sang. She knew Vianesi to be a first-rate conductor, but disliked him personally, and preferred Bevignani as a supreme master of the art of accompaniment. In this she exercised her undoubted right of choice, which Mr. Gye never dared to deny her. Thus, in the season above referred to, it was Bevignani who brought out *Aïda*, which Patti created here, and Vianesi who took in hand *Tannhäuser*, as he had done *Lohengrin* in the previous year. On the whole, for "grand opera" Vianesi was the greater man. M. Adolphe Jullien accurately summed him up in "Grove's Dictionary" when he wrote: "He had a talent for conducting those Italian opera companies which are got together for a month or six weeks, where the singers have neither time to rehearse nor to become acquainted with each other's methods."

September, 1876, for a twelve weeks' stay at the Lyceum Theatre.

There a success and a disappointment awaited him. The former was won with *The Flying Dutchman*. Santley made a strangely mysterious and pathetic figure of Vanderdecken, and sang his music with the requisite fervid energy. Finely given under Carl Rosa himself, the opera was played altogether some twenty times before crowded audiences. The disappointment lay in the comparative failure of Cowen's *Pauline*, for which the composer, then in his twenty-fifth year, had only lack of experience to thank. He had never written for the lyric stage before, and he was hampered by the artificial nature of Bulwer Lytton's story—here set to a stilted, commonplace libretto. Unluckily this temporarily damped Carl Rosa's ardour in the cause of native talent. He proceeded to look abroad for his novelties.

At the Lyceum he gave Adolphe Adam's *Giralda*, Hérold's *Zampa* (for Santley), and Nicolo's *Joconde*. In 1877 he did not bring his troupe to London. In 1878, at the Adelphi, he was to learn that the public did not want Ignaz Brüll's dull opera *The Golden Cross*, but would flock to hear operas like Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor;* a decided victory for Shakespearean comedy allied with tuneful melody and grace. It was this latter visit that reassured Carl Rosa as to the love of his metropolitan supporters for opera sung in their native tongue.

In the meantime Wagner had come and gone. As I shall show later, his Festival at the Albert Hall in 1877 did not enhance his personal reputation, though it whetted the popular appetite for his music; and this was what Carl Rosa was quietly waiting to exploit in London. He

ventured, therefore, to take a larger theatre and to produce opera in English on the " grand " scale. In three successful autumn seasons at Her Majesty's Theatre, viz. in 1879, 1880 and 1882, he gave in turn *Rienzi*, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, besides Hermann Goetz's *Taming of the Shrew*, Bizet's *Carmen* (produced in Italian at the same house in 1878) and Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*. One remembers with a glow of pleasure these admirable performances—the magnificent Rienzi of Joseph Maas ; the robust if rather theatrical Lohengrin and Tannhäuser of the German tenor Schott ; and, not least, the romantic and picturesque heroines of Minnie Hauk.

The attitude of the older musical critics at this juncture was interesting. To use an apt Americanism, they " straddled " most adroitly. Clinging like leeches to their faith in the old school ; protesting their undying love for the phenomenal voices and incomparable singers at Covent Garden and Her Majesty's, they were nevertheless fain to confess that opera in English, as given by Carl Rosa, was a far finer thing than ballad-opera *in excelsis* as manifested in the " palmy days " of Pyne and Harrison. They allowed, in a word, that we had gone ahead. Joseph Bennett, in the *Daily Telegraph*, after cruelly ridiculing *The Ring* at Bayreuth and treating it on the lines of a Christmas pantomime, was now beginning slowly to veer round towards the opposite side of the compass.

It was, moreover, a period of perceptible change. The older London critics were retiring or dying off ; younger men with more advanced ideas were beginning to take their place. The most important of these changes was on the staff of *The Times*. James W. Davison, after many years of undisputed authority as the leading English musical critic, made way in his honoured old age for a

clever, pungent writer of German birth already well known in musical circles for his modern opinions and his ardent advocacy of the Wagnerian cause.

This was Dr. Francis Hueffer, son-in-law of the painter Ford Madox Brown, and father of a bright little boy who was one day to become a distinguished novelist. With his advent in 1878 the ultra-orthodox attitude of *The Times* towards music underwent a complete *volte-face*, the effect of which was not only startling in itself but remarkable in the extent of its influence over the rank and file of the rising critics and, indeed, over general musical thought throughout these islands.

Hueffer knew his power, and used it without delay as soon as he was fairly established on the leading newspaper. He used it, however, with discretion. He hated Italian opera as cordially as his predecessor had loved it ; but conditions did not allow him to give vent to his true feelings all at once. (As a matter of fact, the management of affairs at Covent Garden altered considerably after the death of Frederic Gye, which occurred in 1878 from the effects of a gun accident whilst out shooting.*) So when Hueffer stepped into Davison's shoes, he took care to write about Italian opera in very tolerant if condescending terms. The changing spirit manifested itself in *The Times* rather by increased support and unmeasured praise for Carl Rosa opera and everything connected with it.

The real meaning of this was confided to me one evening, during a chat and a "smoke," by Carl Rosa himself.

* The "star" system was then at its apex, and although it was asserted on the impresario's authority that the average profits of the Covent Garden enterprise from 1872 to 1878 had averaged £15,000 a year—a statement which I took at the time *cum grano salis*—there can be no question that Frederic Gye's death marked the beginning of the end, so far as the old Italian opera system in England was concerned.

(He had married again and was now living at his new house in Westbourne Street, where his widow still resides.) It must have been shortly before the end of his London season of 1882 and when I had been critic of the *Sunday Times* for about a twelvemonth. He began :

" I will tell you a secret: I have arranged with Augustus Harris to give my London season next year at Drury Lane. I am not coming in the autumn but in the spring, and I intend opening on Easter Monday. What ? Throwing down the gauntlet to our Italian friends ? Certainly ; and I think I can do it now without the slightest fear. I will tell you why.

" I have now educated a public of my own, here as well as in the provinces. Harris thinks, of course, that I ought to do bigger business at Drury Lane than anywhere else. But for a long while I have been realizing that I ought to encourage English composers as well as merely run ' opera in English.' Besides, it is my duty.

" Opera-goers must by this time be saturated and sated with foreign opera. Look at what you have had this year, apart from the Italian : the entire *Ring* three times under Anton Seidl at Her Majesty's; and the Pollini troupe at Drury Lane in the whole Wagner and Weber répertoire under Richter ; every bit of it in German, too ! " Carl Rosa shuddered, then smiled as he went on :

" It must have been a gorgeous feast—that I don't deny. Still, a trifle indigestible all at once. Well, mine will consist entirely of ' natives '—no, not oysters ; I mean operas.* I am going to mount two brand-new operas next year by British composers whose names are as yet

* Carl Rosa was inordinately partial to oysters. He was known to dispose of several dozens at a single sitting. I remember one night at a supper which he gave to some friends at the Grand Hotel, Liverpool, he supplied the contents of an entire barrel for the general degustation.

very little known. They will go into rehearsal soon, and if possible I shall produce them at the beginning of the season."

True to his word, Carl Rosa opened at Drury Lane on Easter Monday, 1883, with Arthur Goring Thomas's four-act opera *Esmeralda*, adapted by Theo. Marzials and A. Randegger from Victor Hugo's play *Notre Dame*. It was received with extraordinary enthusiasm by a packed audience—a result due at once to the Gallic charm of its melodious score, its picturesque stage setting, and the admirable singing of Georgina Burns, Clara Perry, Barton McGuckin, Ben Davies (making his début as Gringoire), Leslie Crotty, William Ludwig and Snazelle.

On the following night came the second novelty, *Colomba*, a "lyrical drama" founded upon Prosper Mérimée's novel, written by Francis Hueffer and composed by Alexander C. Mackenzie. The cast included Alwina Valleria (a charming American soprano who had sung here for several years in Italian opera, and died at Nice early in 1925), Clara Perry, Barton McGuckin, Ben Davies, William Ludwig, Henry Pope and Franco Novara (*né* Nash); the composer conducting. The success, though not perhaps so emphatic or spontaneous as in the case of *Esmeralda*, was still great. The beauty and originality of the music won instant recognition; but its good effect was hindered by the turgid flow of a dull, verbose libretto, lacking alike in dramatic contrast and poetic grace.

Still, Carl Rosa was delighted with the outcome of his venture. I never saw him looking prouder or happier than when he found that these new English operas were both drawing good houses.

MANUEL GARCIA

*Photo: Barsano.*

CARL ROSA

BRAR

"Fine, fine!" was his exclamation. "It is no joke to fill Drury Lane every night as we are doing. It is simply marvellous. Harris is astonished. I shall ask Goring Thomas and Mackenzie each to write another opera for me." Which they accordingly did. But, alack, fate was not to be so helpful the second time as the genial Carl expected.

I have often wished since that I had had the prescience to warn the gifted musician who was until recently the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music not to go to Francis Hueffer for a second libretto. The gloomy book of the *Troubadour* proved to be one of the very worst ever designed for operatic purposes.* Only a man of Hueffer's dreamy, unpractical disposition would have had the unhappy inspiration to represent upon the stage the ghastly scene where the offending lady is compelled by her jealous husband—not, certainly, to eat the roasted heart of her lover, as in the original, but to quaff a goblet of what is supposed to be his blood.

It was solely out of consideration for the interpreters and for Sir Alexander (then Dr.) Mackenzie that the first-night audience—on June 8th, 1886—refrained from a hostile demonstration. Anyhow, the opera was a fiasco, and the wonder was that immediately after this the composer should have written (for the Norwich Festival of 1884) such a fine oratorio as *The Rose of Sharon*. That achievement was, however, probably due to the stimulus of the beautiful Biblical text. Fortunately, Dr. Hueffer's ambition as a librettist did not extend to oratorio; his nearest approach was the poem of *The Sleeping Beauty*, which Sir Frederic Cowen set to music for the Birmingham

* Dr. Hueffer was an authority on Troubadour and Provençal folklore. He lectured on the subject at the Royal Institution in 1880.

Festival of 1885. Four years later he ceased to be musical critic of *The Times*.

If I had to fix a date in the history of the Carl Rosa enterprise when the fortunes of what we now call British opera stood at their rosiest, I should name the spring of 1885. That year saw the production, on April 16th, of Goring Thomas's second opera, *Nadeshda*, a much stronger, more individual work than *Esmeralda*, with a libretto by Julian Sturgis that is one of the most poetic and elegant in the English language.* Not a breath of adverse criticism did *Nadeshda* evoke, either then or when subsequently revived at Drury Lane, nor at the various Continental cities where (like *Colomba*) it was eagerly mounted by Intendants in search of promising novelties. During the intervening season of 1884 Rosa brought out Villiers Stanford's *Canterbury Pilgrims*, and in 1887 (at Liverpool) Frederick Corder's *Nordisa;* but neither of these attained such striking success as *Nadeshda*.

When Carl Rosa issued (in May, 1886) his public challenge to Italian opera, he pointed to a record of sixty-five operas produced in eleven years, including " all schools, from Beethoven, Mozart and Cherubini to Wagner, and five operas by native composers expressly written for this company." He thought the time had come for proving that opera in English could be successfully given in London during the summer, and boldly if ungrammatically added, " The enterprise will be materially assisted if proper importance to the subject be given by those who lead public opinion in musical matters." To this suggestion the Press might well have paid closer heed. Nevertheless, the public

* Julian Sturgis subsequently wrote the books of Sullivan's one serious opera, *Ivanhoe*, and Villiers Stanford's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

responded magnificently, and Queen Victoria gave society a "lead" by subscribing for the Royal box for the first time.

After that Carl Rosa's health began to give way, and he formed his business into a limited liability company, hoping thereby effectively to carry on his work. But Carl Rosa has had no successor. English opera has been blessed with no leader like him since he relinquished the reins. His sometime partner, Sir Augustus Harris, had too many other interests; and, anyhow, he preferred "polyglot" to purely native opera. Even Sir Thomas Beecham—sterling musician, fine connoisseur, accomplished conductor—could not do things in the way that Rosa did and command the pockets of London opera-goers in the process.

Consequently, the death of Carl Rosa, at the comparatively early age of forty-seven, was an irreparable loss to English music. He had given to it new life, new movement, at an epoch when the impetus was sorely needed. He was ever advancing with the times and knew how to apply talent as well as how to find it. Yet, sad to relate, his merits and valuable labours in a national cause never received official recognition. He was never offered a knighthood or, indeed, decoration of any sort.

Until 1876 I had spent a portion of my holidays every summer in Norwich. In that year, however, my grandmother died, and so keenly did I feel the loss that my subsequent visits to my native city became few and far between. Her loving interest in my welfare had followed and sustained me from the cradle. My grandfather's death had occurred the year before (both of them were

over eighty), and with it is associated in my memory something that I am told rarely happens. He had been ailing for a considerable time, but felt well enough to play his customary game of whist on the preceding evening. I was his partner; my grandmother and one of my aunts were our opponents. In course of the game the old gentleman declared that there was no need to play his hand; and he spread his cards out on the table. He had been dealt all thirteen trumps! Next morning he died.

David Soman was born at Lunéville in 1794. He had lived in Norwich nearly sixty years, and of the hundreds who knew him there, including his own numerous workpeople, I am convinced that scarcely anyone would have guessed my grandfather to be a born Frenchman. Yet his proudest recollection was that as a boy he had seen the Emperor, the great Napoleon, riding through his native town on the famous white charger depicted by Meissonier. Like my grandmother, he was extremely fond of music, both, indeed, being excellent singers. He was a man of "infinite jest" and a keen Shakespearean student.

At Bentinck Street we were all tremendous admirers of Henry Irving. I had been to the Lyceum with my parents to see him in *Hamlet*, *The Bells* and *The Lyons Mail*. I also recollect taking my mother in 1878 to see him in a play called *Vanderdecken*, the writing and mounting of which were suggested, possibly, by Carl Rosa's production of *The Flying Dutchman* at the same theatre. It was shortly after this that my father, coming home one day after a morning's work at a school at Notting Hill, surprised us with this announcement:

"Two new boys joined my class this morning. Who do you think they were? The two sons of Henry Irving

—Harry and Laurence. Very nice boys they seem to be, extremely quiet, studious and attentive. I like them exceedingly, and Harry reminds me very much of his father." As a matter of fact, Harry took a great fancy to his professor, for in after years, when we became close friends, "H. B." would frequently make allusion to his studies under my father at Notting Hill.

In October, 1879, I obtained leave of absence from my newspapers and went abroad for the first time in my life, spending a week in Paris and a month in Italy. During the former I saw a superb revival of *L'Africaine* at the Opéra and an unforgettable performance of *Hernani* at the Comédie Française. Meyerbeer's swan-song (then only fourteen years old) had just been furnished with a new *mise en scène*, the feature of which was a novel mechanism whereby Vasco da Gama's ship was made bodily to turn several "points" on the stage when Nelusko is supposed to change its course. A still greater joy for me, though, was the miracle of beauty that the Nelusko accomplished with his voice.

This was the celebrated baritone Lassalle: young, fresh, scarcely yet in his prime—glorious to look upon and listen to—the possessor of probably the noblest male voice that France produced during the nineteenth century. Only three months previously I had witnessed his début at Covent Garden with Albani and Gayarre in Massenet's *Roi de Lahore;* but this was the first time I had heard him as Nelusko, and it came as a revelation. When he gave up singing, Lassalle became a cement manufacturer. He lost all his money in the business and died a poor man.

Sarah Bernhardt I had seen before in London in *Phèdre* and *Andromaque*. Nay, more, I had been invited

to an "at home" that she gave one afternoon in a room over the Piccadilly entrance to St. James's Hall. The latter was a notable affair for several reasons—for the interesting crowd, for the (at that time) unusual mixture of society, the arts, and the stage; and also for the fact that the divine Sarah, then as eccentric as she was lovely, had brought with her her famous coffin for English eyes to gaze upon.

She accorded me a few minutes' chat on that occasion, and was full of admiration for London and gratitude for endless ovations. Her *voix d'or* was the most exquisite speaking voice both on and off the stage that I ever listened to. Her memory for faces must have been good, for she remembered me instantly when I met her, with my brother Charles, at Niagara Falls in 1896. Our parties united to visit the "Cave of the Winds," where I had the unique pleasure of beholding the *svelte* Sarah, in a suit of oil-silk garments with trousers complete, tobogganing down a steep mound of snow between two male members of her troupe. She told me she had never laughed so heartily in her life.

I saw Sarah Bernhardt in all her great rôles, besides being present in Paris at the actual *premières* of *La Tosca* and *Fédora*. I watched the development of that amazing genius through its many curious and striking phases. I was not lucky enough to be able to compare her in the *Dame aux Camélias* with the original, Aimée Desclée. But I had seen the gifted Fargueil in the part at the St. James's Theatre, and so could judge her from that lofty standard. Adelina Patti—greatest of Violettas—always said that the heroine of Dumas' play never had an interpreter so ideal as Sarah Bernhardt, and I think she was right. And yet, whenever I wish to recall her at her very

finest, my thoughts always go back to a night at the Théâtre-Français in 1879, when I saw her as Victor Hugo's Doña Sol, youthful, elegant, fascinating, full of superb fire. With Mounet-Sully, Worms, Febvre and Maubain for her companions, she shone resplendent with genius amid a wondrous constellation of histrionic talent.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STORY OF ST. JAMES'S HALL

Concert-going in the 'Seventies—Memories of St. James's Hall—Romance of the House of Chappell—Arthur Chappell and the "Pops"—The Institution: Its Founders and Supporters—Creating a Great Educational Force—Alfredo Piatti and the Christy Minstrels—The Greatness of Joachim—Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Monday "Pops"—Robert Browning's Tribute—The Jubilees of Joachim and Piatti—Sonnet by Robert Bridges—The Hall: its Dangers and Delights—Musical Union Concerts: a Forgotten Rite—Professor Ella—Début of Camille Saint-Saëns—James Davison Says "Adieu"—How the "Pops" came to an End.

THE pivotal centre of our musical universe is the concert world. It moves in an orbit of its own, attracting to it all the lesser worlds of workers in the art. The history of serious music in this country during the past three centuries shows that what has appealed most to the hearts of the people has been that which has emanated from the Church and the Chamber—the music made by the choir, the orchestra, and the vocal or instrumental soloist.

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* There were too many concerts fifty years ago, just as there are now. One tiresome form of ordeal the critic was happily spared—the modern recital. I will not say it had not been invented; but it had not become common. There were, however, other concerts that could also be a weariness to the flesh—miscellaneous, operatic, "national," and ballad—only to be avoided if one played the rôle of "conscientious objector" and left such things to the intelligent reporter.

There were, besides, the fashionable concerts given in

commodious drawing-rooms, "by kind permission of the Duchess or the Countess of So-and-so," with tickets at not less than a guinea apiece. These formed the happy hunting-ground of the talented foreigner or of the native débutant who concealed his or her nationality under a non-British pseudonym; only they were usually restricted to the London season, i.e. from Easter till July.

There was no demand for small concert-halls. I do not remember a single one in the West End until the Steinways built their room in what used to be called Lower Seymour Street, and the Chappells erected the Princes' Hall (subsequently Princes Restaurant); the Bechstein (or Wigmore) and the Æolian Halls were opened much later. In the 'seventies the Royal Albert Hall had not yet come into general use; and moribund places such as St. Martin's Hall, Exeter Hall (now the Strand Palace Hotel) and the Hanover Square Rooms, were growing less and less frequented.

The only hall sought after for the most important concerts, alike on account of its convenient position, its reasonable dimensions, and its excellent acoustics—though certainly not for comfortable seating, beauty of design, good ventilation, or freedom from draughts—was the place that every class of the community loved to go to, whether for music or a church service, for a lecture or a reading—I mean St. James's Hall.

St. James's Hall. . . .

What memories the name conjures up! Memories almost more fragrant and precious, certainly more personal and intimate, than any that the "oldest habitué" can associate with Covent Garden. At St. James's Hall no footlights, no orchestral "pit," separated you from your artists. When they mounted the half-dozen steps leading

from under the steep narrow orchestra to the platform, they seemed to be coming into actual contact with you. A November fog would occasionally obscure them in a filmy shroud ; but otherwise you would behold them as plainly as you could hear them, and that was to perfection. Until electricity came, there were only rows of gas stars, pendent from the lofty ceiling.

It was not a triumph of graceful architecture, that big oblong room, with its narrow Gothic windows, its lofty arched ceiling, its shallow balcony on three sides with sharp rectangular corners, and its steep, undersized orchestra, surmounted by an unsightly, ill-sounding organ. But who cared ? We went there to enjoy great music and great artists. The plain interior mattered no more than the ugly exterior—a positive eyesore to the neighbourhood, towering over Nash's symmetrical Quadrant like a huge brick Noah's Ark resting upon a Mount Ararat of smoking roofs and chimneys. But we heeded these things as little as we minded the culinary odour from the restaurant ; not half so much as the occasional distant echo of the Christy Minstrels, or the inevitable muffin-bell, or the chimes of St. James's, Piccadilly, striking the quarters or the hour.

St. James's Hall formed a chapter in the romance of the "House of Chappell," * already a great firm of music-publishers in the days when I knew Tom Chappell, the principal partner. He was a tall man with a clean-shaven face, a genial smile, and an old-world manner ; he formed the company which built the hall and was its first (and only) chairman. He once told me something about it :

"We had enormous trouble with the foundations.

* A monograph was written thereon by Mr. E. Goodman for the Chappell Centenary in 1912.

Until they had been started no one suspected that we were working upon a quicksand situated at what was, centuries ago, known as the ancient boundary of Thorney Island. We had to fill that in with thousands of tons of concrete, and the upshot was that the hall, instead of costing us £23,000, cost £70,000. The wonder was that we ever persevered with it. But we did ; and on March 25th, 1858, we opened it with a concert in aid of the Middlesex Hospital at which the Prince Consort was present."

After the new hall had been built and opened, no one would hire it. It stood empty for nearly a year, disheartening and worrying its owners precisely as the Queen's Hall was to do for a time after its erection forty years later. But this second difficulty was a blessing in disguise. It led to the establishment of the famous institution known as the " Monday Pops."

How this came about I heard from the lips of Arthur Chappell, the Director of the "Pops," who told me the story at length in what he declared to be the first newspaper interview he had ever granted.*

" Uncle Arthur " was then a man of sixty, but I had known him several years. Unlike some " directors " of a later day, he was always " approachable "; he would receive me in his quiet office on the second floor of the house next to the old Chappell shop in Bond Street (on the floor above was also the office of the well-known musical agent, N. Vert), where he carried on a separate business in brass and wood-wind instruments. Arthur Chappell did not bear the least resemblance to his elder brother Tom, and looked the older man of the two, being quite

* Published among a series entitled " Enthusiasts Interviewed," in the *Sunday Times* of January 25th, 1885.

bald, with a prominent nose and rather long, straggling beard.

He was not a musician, but a genuine dilettante; and he knew the catalogue of the masterpieces performed at the Pops by heart, which is saying a great deal. His programmes were gems of perfect arrangement, attractive and satisfying to everyone. He was proud, too, of his subscribers, who included many of the foremost Victorian poets, painters, and littérateurs. Tennyson came now and then; Browning attended regularly and sat not far from Watts in the third row of the stalls ; Swinburne and Burne-Jones would be present on special occasions; but the Rossettis, Leighton, Alma Tadema, Herkomer, Alfred Gilbert and Horsley were regular attendants ; and I remember seeing Whistler there once or twice in the company of his friend William Heinemann. Arthur James (now Earl) Balfour, Arthur Coleridge and the Lytteltons were among the constant habitués.

Arthur Chappell positively hated being thrown into prominence. I won him over to this "interview," I think, by reminding him of his then recent public appearance as triangle-player in a charity performance of Haydn's "Toy Symphony," conducted by the late Countess of Radnor (then Lady Folkestone), in which Henry Leslie, William Kuhe, and at least five musical knights *in posse* took part, viz. William Cusins, Charles Hallé, August Manns, Charles Santley and Arthur Sullivan. But, if Arthur Chappell objected at first, he was afterwards undoubtedly pleased, for he reprinted the whole report as an *entr'acte* in one of the Pop programmes.

"You want," he began, "to know how the Pops came into existence ? Well, as much as anything because we

had to set St. James's Hall going. The place in 1858 had been standing idle for many months, not earning a penny on the capital which we and our friends had invested. What was to be done? My brother Tom and I talked it over with Julius Benedict, and we decided to give three concerts just before Christmas, in the 'Cattle Show Week,' dividing between us any profit or loss. Well, we made a net gain of £180.

"This was so encouraging that we immediately arranged another series; but this time Benedict would not join us, except as accompanist—a post that he was to hold till a short time before his death. The second series we called 'Monday Popular Concerts,' because the programmes were made up of popular miscellaneous items (instrumental pieces, ballads and so forth) and we were charging lower prices than the public was then in the habit of paying. This time we neither lost nor made money.

"One night, as I was leaving the hall, I came across James Davison and asked him what he thought about it. I felt we were not on the right track, and I wanted my old friend the critic of *The Times* to give us the benefit of his advice.

"'Why do you not make these concerts *classical*,' he asked, 'and perform only chamber music?'

"'What do I know about classical music?' said I.

"'What do you need to know?' was Davison's retort. And then he proceeded to talk about the extent of the field that lay before us, the inexhaustible répertoire, the big public to be educated to love chamber music, the artistic aim, and so forth.

"Well, I thought it over carefully, consulted Tom again, and eventually asked Jimmy Davison to help me by making out programmes for six concerts. He did so, arranging a

Mendelssohn night, two Mozart nights, two Beethoven nights, and a Haydn and Weber night, and prefacing them with an eloquent introductory address. He also wrote the analytical notes for the sixpenny programme-books (on which we never made a profit); in short, the whole idea was entirely new to the ordinary musical Londoner of that period.

"The date of the first Monday Pop was February 14th, 1859, and the performers were Henri Wieniawski, first violin, Louis Ries, second violin, C. W. Doyle, viola, Alfredo Piatti, 'cello, and Charles Hallé, pianist. Santley was the vocalist and Benedict the accompanist; while Dr. Edward J. Hopkins (the renowned organist of the Temple Church) played two solos on the organ. The inaugural series actually yielded a small profit, but the following one resulted in a loss, and again we were sorely tempted to abandon the venture. However, Davison persuaded us to give two more concerts. These were well attended, so we went on; and in this way the Popular Concerts were finally started.

"This title, by the way, was described in one newspaper as an 'impudent misnomer, seeing that the music was of the most consistently *un*popular character.' But before long the public taste justified it; and when in 1865 I started the Saturday Pops as a means of recouping the rather costly outlay for Joachim's exclusive services, they, too, became a great success.

"But for my own part I felt confident from the night of the second concert of the opening series; and I will tell you why. I went to the back of the hall to listen to Mozart's piano and violin sonata in D, which was being played by Arabella Goddard and Sainton. To my intense surprise, the audience—quite inartistically, if you like—

insisted on having the second movement played over again. I could hardly believe my ears. Then came the thought—knowing what caviare chamber music had until then been to the general public—'There is really something in this.'" So much for the beginning of the crusade.

It will be seen, though, on what a slender thread the life of the world-famous Pops hung at the outset. Had it been severed there and then, the growth of a higher musical culture in England would have been retarded by years. No orchestral enterprise could have accomplished the work done by the Pops in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Where else could the humble music-lover have heard—for a shilling in the gallery and three shillings in the balcony—the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the great composers, interpreted by the most illustrious players of the nineteenth century? It is indisputable that the present generation owes its ability to enjoy and comprehend twentieth-century music to what was taught at St. James's Hall during the existence of the Pops.

Arthur Chappell, who loved "classical" music and loathed ballads, was wont to proclaim that the backbone of the Pops was the "Prince of 'cellists," Alfredo Piatti. The little Italian was assuredly a consummate artist and the most retiring of men. His tone had an exquisite yet not cloying sweetness; his style was a model of grace; his intonation and phrasing the essence of purity. A bit of solo from Piatti broke through like a ray of sunshine. His lovely Stradivarius furnished the quartet with ravishing sound and a wonderful foundation. When the four players returned to the platform at the end of a work, Piatti would be last on and first off; always bowing smartly and hurrying down the steps as though afraid of appropriating more than his share of the applause.

Piatti's world-wide popularity was even reflected downstairs in the smaller hall, where the Christy Minstrels carried on their amusing show. He once told me a story of how he was walking along the corridor leading to the more exalted artists' room, when he was accosted by one of the burnt-cork gentlemen in full war-paint, holding out his hand. Piatti, rather surprised, hesitated to take the proffered fist, whereupon the stranger remarked, "You don't know me, Mr. Piatti, but I am a 'cellist like yourself. I am the Piatti of the Minstrels!"

Oddly enough, it was to this same "Hall of the Minstrels" that we adjourned one night, after the Pop, to present Joachim with a valuable Stradivarius that had been subscribed for by a number of his admirers. After the sounds of banjo and bones had died away and the laughter-aching audience had departed, we entered and gave our hero a rousing reception as he mounted the platform just vacated by Mr. G. W. Moore and his "darkies." Then some of Arthur Chappell's "stalwarts" spoke—among them Sir Frederic Leighton and Mr. Arthur Balfour—and the illustrious violinist responded in his customary modest manner. It was all very quiet, simple and intimate, and very eloquent of the general feeling.

For if Piatti was the "backbone," Joachim was just as truly the "head and front" of the Pops and everything that they stood for. It always pains me when I see some present-day writer belittling the art and the personality of this very great man, even declaring that he was a hindrance to the advance of music in this country. Only want of knowledge or unconscious prejudice can account for such assertions. The few connoisseurs still living who can recall Joachim when he was in his prime know perfectly

well that it was not merely blind hero-worship that caused men to dub him "King of violinists."

In his own noble, serious line he had no rival; and yet those were days when historic names, from Ernst, Sivori, Vieuxtemps, and Wieniawski down to Sarasate, Wilhelmj, and Ysaye, were still being printed on concert bills. The presence of Joachim and his associates in London delayed nothing, hindered nothing. On the contrary, his forty years' work here and his supreme example were the indispensable material and means wherewith the imposing structure of British chamber music has been gradually built up. Joachim was not only a great player but a great teacher; and it is to what he taught, in Germany as well as in England, in a creative as well as an executive sense, that the art of the quartet owes its splendid modern development and appreciation.

When the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Pops was celebrated, in 1884, and the artists presented Arthur Chappell with an album containing their portraits and autographs "as a token of their friendship and esteem," the dedicatory verses which prefaced it (together with a small yet life-like sketch by Alma Tadema) were from the inspired pen of Robert Browning. Here are his lines *:—

"The Founder of the Feast"

"Enter my palace," if a prince should say—
"Feast with the Painters, see in boundless row
They range from Titian up to Angelo,"—
Could we be silent at the rich survey?
A host as kindly, in as great a way
Invites to banquet, substitutes for show,
Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
Bach like Beethoven; are we thankless, pray?
Thanks to Arthur Chappell, thanks to him

* Quoted by permission of Mr. John Murray.

Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts,
Sense has received the utmost Nature grants.
My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
When, night by night—ah, memory, how it haunts !—
Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
By Hallé, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim.

The one-thousandth concert of the Pops occurred on April 4th, 1887. Only once before in the annals of music has such a record been attained by a single institution. But, whereas the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concerts took over a century, the Popular Concerts achieved the same record in twenty-eight years. A monumental programme was performed to celebrate the event, the final item being Schumann's piano quintet, played by Madame Schumann, Joachim, Mme. Norman-Néruda (Lady Hallé), Ludwig Straus and Piatti. In addition, Fanny Davies, Agnes Zimmermann, Liza Lehmann and Santley represented native talent on that memorable night.

After the fifteen-hundredth concert, in March, 1900, I received from the director this pleasing little note :

50, New Bond Street,
*March* 27, 1900.

Dear Klein,—Allow me to thank you for the very kind manner in which you reviewed the 1,500th concert. It certainly is an extraordinary result of sticking to one line of music, such as I have always done. With kind regards, yours very truly,

S. Arthur Chappell.

It has been asserted that Arthur Chappell, in his uncompromising adoration of the "classical," disregarded the claims of the British composer. He did nothing of the kind. The repertory of the Pops comprised some 750 works. But among the 138 composers of various nation-

alities who wrote them, at least twenty were born in the United Kingdom, including Sterndale Bennett, G. A. Macfarren, A. C. Mackenzie, Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford.

The English jubilee of Joachim and Piatti was celebrated in March, 1894, by a reception at the Grafton Galleries, for which I acted as organizing secretary. We had speeches as well as a "band" (quite a novelty at such affairs then), for the two heroes had to reply to addresses read by Sir George Grove and Sir Alexander Mackenzie. What is more, all the artistic notabilities were there. How the reception "went" will be best shown by a letter from the distinguished head of the Royal College of Music, which I received after it was over :

Worthing,
*April* 15, 1894.

Dear Mr. Klein,—That brilliantly successful function in honour of Joachim and Piatti must have been most admirably financed ! I thought we were in for a five-pound note at least. And, as far as the effect of the reception went, I am sure it was worth it. I am so glad it went off so well, and I hope you are pleased at the result yourself. I enclose a cheque.—Very sincerely yours,

C. Hubert H. Parry.

Again, ten years later (May 16th, 1904) the diamond jubilee of Dr. Joachim's first appearance in England was marked by a reception at Queen's Hall, at which Mr. Arthur (now Earl) Balfour presided. At this reception Sir Hubert Parry read the address, and a portrait of the illustrious fiddler by Sargent was presented to him by the chairman in the name of hundreds of subscribers. In the programme of the evening Joachim himself took part, supported by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Sir Henry

Wood. This was the sonnet* which the Poet Laureate wrote expressly for the occasion:

> Belov'd of all to whom the Muse is dear
> Who hid her spirit of rapture from the Greek,
> Whereby our art excelleth the antique
> Perfecting formal beauty to the ear;
>
> Thou hast been in England many a year
> The interpreter who left us naught to seek,
> Making Beethoven's inmost passion speak,
> Bringing the soul of great Sebastian near;
>
> Their music liveth ever, and 'tis just
> That thou, good Joachim—so high thy skill—
> Rank, as thou shalt upon the heav'nly hill,
> Laurel'd with them; for thy ennobling trust
> Remember'd when thy loving hand is still,
> And ev'ry ear that heard thee stopt with dust.
>
> ROBERT BRIDGES.

St. James's Hall is gone, but it remains alive in its associations. Where the Piccadilly Hotel now stands I see a couple of swing-doors between two shops, opening to a short flight of steps. Then more steps at a right angle, which took you up to the balcony, unless you stopped half-way at a little half-concealed door. That door—hear it, ye officers of the L.C.C. !—was the main entrance and exit to our "Noah's Ark." In case of fire or panic, I often thought, in the words uttered by Pluto in my Orphean school-burlesque—

> You may read above our gates, in letters plain and clear,
> "Of getting out, all hope abandon, ye who enter here!"

Fortunately, on the Piccadilly side there were two entrances and two staircases—one, of a more recent date, actually

* Quoted by permission of Mr. John Murray.

constructed of marble. But, as a whole, the dear old place was a dreadful fire-trap.

What a capital ballroom it made ! It had a delightfully smooth, polished floor—that was, after the long, narrow, comfortless forms, with the hard cushions and no arm-rests, had been removed. There would I dance at the balls given by that rough but jolly Bohemian, Moore of the Minstrels, and waltz the old *trois-temps* with sweet, comely Florence St. John, graceful Kate Vaughan and fairylike Letty Lind.

Did not my mother once give her own " annual ball " there (in 1880, I fancy), with more space for the dancers than she used to have in the overcrowded Noverre's Rooms or the Royal Hotel in the old days at Norwich ? And did not Coote and Tinney's band, conducted by Charles Coote in person, " perform " the only composition of mine that was ever heard in St. James's Hall ?—to wit, the " Adelaide Valses," named after my mother and published (after they had been played at the Covent Garden " Proms ") with a coloured frontispiece thoughtfully provided by the then youthful firm of Enoch & Sons, in Holles Street.

Under yet another aspect do I recall St. James's Hall, namely, at the concerts of the Musical Union, a body which flourished on a small but useful scale between 1844 and 1880. The first occasion I recollect (on the 4th of July, 1876) was the first appearance at these concerts of Camille Saint-Saëns, then an alert, energetic man of forty, impulsive in manner and rapid in speech, to whom I had been introduced at Bentinck Street when he came to visit my master, Manuel Garcia.

The peculiar and then novel feature of the Musical Union was that the players were placed in the middle of

the hall, with their auditors sitting in a circle round them. No seats were reserved, although by courtesy a few were kept vacant for old subscribers in the front row of the "ring." I am not sure where Professor Ella, the worthy founder of the Union, got the idea, but it was certainly a charming one, besides being in every way beneficial. Surely this—imitated years later by Joachim and others—was exactly the right way to listen to chamber music, whether in public or *en petit comité*. Allowing that St. James's Hall was too narrow and not of ideal shape for this purpose, I am bound to say that the blending and volume of the instrumental tone—even including the piano, because it was then less powerful and more delicately played—sounded quite different from the ordinary effect of the quartet seated upon the usual platform.

Another point. It was by the Musical Union that the use of analytical programmes was brought into fashion; and, to add to their value, they were distributed among the subscribers prior to the day of the concert, on a plan imitated in America years ago by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The advantage of being able to obtain guidance beforehand for the hearing of new works is too obvious to need insistence. Thus, if the Musical Union did little to foster native art, it did a great deal indirectly by encouraging the taste for "classical" music in our more exalted social circles.*

John Ella, Professor "of that ilk" (or, rather, of the London Institution, where he lectured on music in the 'fifties), was quite a character. He was a short, rather pompous individual, and had originally been intended for

* An article in "Grove's Dictionary" justly remarks that "a list of all the artists who have appeared at the Musical Union would include the names of all the most celebrated executants of the middle of the nineteenth century, many of whom were first introduced into England by Ella."

the law, but had given the preference to music. He was very proud of having studied harmony under Thomas Attwood, the favourite English pupil of Mozart, and sometime organist of the Chapel Royal (Attwood lies buried in St. Paul's under the organ); but, before he started the Musical Union, Ella was best known as a violinist. When I first met him in 1875 he was over seventy, but exceedingly active for his years. He made a point of trying to speak a word to most of his subscribers at every concert, yet without disturbing the music; flitting from place to place (when he was not looking after his artists) and "flopping" into the nearest vacant seat the moment the music was resumed.

On the hot July day when Saint-Saëns was to appear I went up into the balcony, which was almost empty, to look down upon the unwonted scene. It was curious to see the artists making their way along the hall to the centre of the arena and seating themselves in the very midst of their audience. I went down to hear the famous organist of the Madeleine play his solo, and was greatly struck by the clear, crisp quality of his touch, which seemed to be quite unusual in an organist.

The only composition of his own was the now familiar duet for two pianos on the theme from Beethoven's E flat sonata. Saint-Saëns played it with Mme. Jaell; and exceedingly brilliant did it sound, though it was not so perfect a performance as that which he gave with Mme. Montigny-Rémaury (delightful pianist !) at the Princes' Hall a few years later. I ventured once to recall this to the *maître*. He did not hesitate an instant : "There was good reason for the difference. With one lady there had been no opportunity to rehearse; with the other I had already played the duet at a dozen concerts in France." That

was as far as his chivalry would allow comparisons to go.

When the London season was at its height, the hard-worked musical critics spent most of their afternoons and evenings at St. James's Hall. James Davison used to protest loudly on the subject to his friend Ambrose Austin, the manager of the hall :

"Why can't you give me a bed somewhere and let me live here altogether ? They could supply my meals from the restaurant, and I might save hours by not having to go home." Had those been the days of the telephone and wireless "listening-in," I am not so sure that Davison would have left home at all. As it was he used to spend a good many hours at a corner table in the smoking-room at Blanchard's, a favourite neighbouring restaurant in Beak Street. Thence would he dispatch his notices to Printing House Square and some of the articles for his waspish weekly paper, the *Musical World*. But he was very lame in his old days and could not get about easily.

The Pops became extinct with the sixteen-hundred-and-second concert of the unbroken series on March 28th, 1901. Public support had begun seriously to fall off, especially for the Mondays. Most of the old subscribers were dead, and the new director opined that the business in Bond Street did not exist for purely philanthropic purposes. Yet one cannot help feeling that, had Tom Chappell still been alive, or his brother Arthur not growing too old (he died in December, 1904, aged seventy-eight), the collapse would not have been permitted to take place. At any rate, it would not have been permitted so long as Joachim was able to come over with his celebrated quartet.

TOM BOWLING.
CHARLES DIBDIN
S.G. MANTON
With kind regards
S. Reeves

SIMS REEVES

Charles Dickens wrote in 1869 : " I do believe that such people as the Chappells are very rarely to be found in human affairs. To say nothing of their noble and munificent manner of sweeping away into space all the charges incurred uselessly," etc. Thirty years later things were not quite the same. But really the considerations which involved the existence of such an institution as the Pops ought to have been treated more in the spirit of *Noblesse oblige !*

The vocal music at the Pops was always on the same lofty plane as the instrumental. The best singers of the day were not too good for Arthur Chappell. Sims Reeves, Lloyd, and Santley made frequent appearances there and brought with them their choicest treasures of " classical song." My chief joy in the early days was, I think, to hear Sims Reeves in " Adelaïda "—to the Italian version, of course. His voice then was still strong, with all the velvety charm that it never lost ; and he had made Beethoven's glorious air his own. The reason was simple : he sang it like a great artist. The management of the tone and the breathing was absolutely faultless, and he invested every phrase with indescribable beauty, whilst working up to a final climax that touched the noblest heights of poetic feeling. It was an unforgettable experience to hear Sims Reeves in " Adelaïda," for it ranked with his marvellous rendering of " Comfort ye " and the " Passion Music " in the *Messiah*. After such things it used to seem odd, yet somehow never unwelcome, to listen to his " Tom Bowling " and " Death of Nelson " at the Ballads. His art lifted them to the level of acceptableness.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHOIRS AND—BALLADS

Palmy Days of Choral Music—The Sacred Harmonic at Exeter Hall—Sir Michael Costa and Sir Joseph Barnby—A Resemblance and a Contrast—Henry Leslie's Choir: A Unique Amateur Organization—Its Regrettable Collapse—Bach Choir—Decline of the Choral Art—A Talk with William Leslie—The Ballad "Craze"—Its Exponents and Exploiters—The House of Boosey—Ambrose Austin—His National Saints' Ballad Concerts—The Origin of the "Patti Concert"—The House of Novello—Henry Littleton and the Albert Hall—His Labours in the Cause of Music.

I HAVE had of late to read and listen to so many unpleasant comparisons, based chiefly upon supposition or guesswork, in disparagement of the past and in praise of the present, that, sooth to say, if I could take an honest revenge I would like to do so. After all, the ability to institute reliable comparisons is not merely a matter of taste, but of expert judgment; and obviously the elderly critic who has lived at both ends of the period under discussion must be in a better position to exercise that function than the youthful critic whose experience is limited to only one end, or even to one end and a bit of the intervening middle. Now take our boasted national asset—choral singing.

With my Norwich and Liverpool experiences behind me, I had not a bad standard for the judgment of choral work when I went to my first Sacred Harmonic performance at Exeter Hall in the autumn of 1874. That was to hear a revival of Handel's *Deborah* under Sir Michael Costa, with soloists who included Julia Elton (contralto),

Vernon Rigby (tenor), and Santley. The choir consisted of remarkably fine picked voices and sang Handel as I had never heard him sung before. Nor have I since heard better under ordinary conditions; for this was an ordinary oratorio performance, not an example of choral singing by phenomenal Yorkshire voices picked for a Leeds Festival.

Costa and Barnby were beyond all question the ablest choral conductors of their day. In their methods of training a choir they were said to resemble each other not a little. In their mode of using the baton they certainly did so; there were the same weight and decision in the beat, the same vigorous swing. The masterful Neapolitan exerted an extraordinary magnetic control over his singers; he had the power of infusing into them an irresistible rhythm and real dynamic energy. He had the reputation of being a severe taskmaster, a veritable martinet with his singers and orchestras; but the result afforded the best justification for his stern discipline. Such delicate nuances of tone in big masses as he obtained at Birmingham and in Exeter Hall he could not, of course, get at the Crystal Palace; but, 400 or 4,000, it was all the same to Costa when Handelian "runs" had to be sung. They were equally magnificent everywhere.

Enjoyment of choral music is generally affected in a degree by the *locale*. Nowhere has the *Messiah* sounded so sublime to my ears as in Westminster Abbey. Often have I sat under the dome of St. Paul's and listened to the annual performance of Bach's St. Matthew *Passion*. Yet the latter masterpiece has never impressed me so profoundly anywhere as it used under Barnby at St. Anne's, Soho—that quiet church where Barnby first familiarized London with Bach's immortal work.

Barnby, if the physical counterpart of Costa in action

and no less of a disciplinarian, was not quite so relentless in his beat; a trifle more plastic though just as precise. Of the two, Costa obtained the more perfect *legato;* he had the secret—which Richter also possessed—of absolute continuity, whilst indicating to a hair's-breadth where the beat or the bar began and ended. The bigger the numbers of the executive force, the wider the sweep of the arm, that was all. At heart Costa was not a harsh man.

One of his fiddlers once begged for leave of absence from rehearsal to attend his brother's wedding. "I am sorry," answered Sir Michael, "I cannot let you off for anything less than a funeral. Stay!" he added, "it may prove to be the same thing; you can go!"

On the whole, Barnby had the stronger sense of humour, and by joking he contrived very often to get splendid choral singing without making it what one of his biographers* termed "a kind of drill." To his friends he was fond of writing jocular letters. Here is one that I received from him in reply to an invitation to dine with me at Whitehall Court, to meet M. Paderewski, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Signor Manuel Garcia, Signor Piatti, and other friends.

9, St. George's Square, S.W.
*April* 25, 1894.

My dear Klein,—I am charged with the duty of conducting Elijah to heaven in a "firey-firey" chariot with "firey-firey" horses at eight to-morrow night. How then can I do this thing and sin against the Lord, you duffer?—Yours nevertheless,

Joseph.

P.S.—Have just re-read your letter, and found it is to-morrow *week* you want me! So I forgive you, and I shall present myself at the hour named.

* "Grove's Dictionary," Vol. i, p. 189.

No one was sorry when the Sacred Harmonic Society deserted the Strand and migrated in 1880 to St. James's Hall for the last half-dozen years of its existence. The sole drawback was that the orchestra there only accommodated 300 performers, the choristers having sometimes to overflow into the balcony. However, it was admirably suited for the body of 240 singers, constituting Henry Leslie's Choir, which in 1878 gained the first prize in the International Choral competition held during the Paris Exhibition.*

Henry Leslie's Choir was a famous and unique amateur organization. From its formation in 1856 it immediately went to the top of the tree. When Henry Leslie, who had been the honorary secretary, took the leadership, it became the finest body of its class in the world; for this tall, unassuming, spectacled musician with the fair, spare beard, was not only a clever composer, but as a choral conductor a supreme master of his *métier*—a far greater, in fact, than any now living. There may be his equals in enthusiasm, but none who so completely have the secrets of the art at their fingers' ends.

Henry Leslie's Choir was perfect in its unity and balance, its precision of attack, its delicate gradations of strength, and, perhaps above all, the miraculous beauty and tenuity of its pianissimo. In *a cappella* singing it could not be approached by any of the Continental choirs. It was a lovely, pure, delicious English tone all through, with human feeling, individual intelligence, and just the right expressive touch to give you a thrill as you listened. Unaccompanied or accompanied, the singing of this choir

* Gounod, who was one of the jury and had often heard Leslie's choir in London, declared that it was impossible for singing of this *genre* to attain a higher degree of perfection.

ever presented the same faultless art, the same valuable object-lesson in ear cultivation. Such an institution ought never to have been allowed to collapse and disappear. Efforts were made to avert the disaster by Alberto Randegger, and even by Henry Leslie himself, but without success. The end came in 1887, just before that of the Sacred Harmonic. London was thus deprived almost at a blow of two of the finest choirs it had ever had, and for the same reason—want of adequate public support. The taste of the rising generation seemed to be tending in other directions.

All this helps to explain why choral singing to-day is palpably inferior to what it was before the close of the nineteenth century. The Bach Choir was another amateur body with splendid traditions, which it has proved incapable of maintaining. No one who *knew* would think of comparing its present work with that done under Otto Goldschmidt, when his wife (then still the energetic Mme. Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt) sat beside the Princess Christian in the front row of this aristocratic choir, notably when it performed Bach's Mass in B minor at St. James's Hall for the first time in this country. In the Bach Choir's hour of trial individual effort at preservation for once succeeded, after the disappearance or defection of the leader who had been the creative life and soul of the undertaking.

Would that it had been the same with Henry Leslie's Choir and the Pops! They have left behind them vacant places which nothing in their line has been equal to filling. Chamber music has suffered less; nay, in an executive sense has gone ahead. But this only because it has broken up into a multitude of smaller organizations and because the performers are more English than of yore. The real

redeeming feature here is that composers of the modern school, British as well as foreign, have provided fresh fuel to fan the flame of interest and curiosity. That has meant progress.

Music, like the Drama, must be translated into sound or into movement and action in order to fulfil its artistic purpose. To enjoy painting and sculpture, you can, by walking into the National Gallery or the British Museum or the Tate Gallery, study at your leisure (generally without payment) some of the greatest *chefs-d'œuvre* that the world contains. Those are places for education as well as recreation, because they bring into light the glories of the past. Theirs is a higher function than that of a Royal Academy Exhibition or a fortnight's show in a Bond Street gallery, which only serves to illustrate the mutations, the daily and hourly travail, of current development. But you cannot take in the scores of the old masters in similar fashion, whether shown to you in a glass case or handed to you for perusal. To be rightly appreciated they need to be performed.

It was the late William Leslie, a brother of Henry Leslie (not, of course, his son " C. F. H.," the well-known cricketer), who first occupied the post of secretary to the St. James's Hall Company. He was a charming man, and I used often to enjoy a chat with him in his office over the Piccadilly entrance. I once told him that the various kinds of music I had to listen to in St. James's Hall were in turn the joy and the bane of my existence.

" It is here that I hear the most beautiful music that has ever been written—played and sung by the greatest artists. It is also here that I have to waste my time listening to such dull, boring, unedifying things as the London

Ballad Concerts. Why, in Heaven's name, did John Boosey ever invent them?"

"To sell his songs, of course," answered Mr. Leslie. "You ask the question because you hate ballad concerts; so do I. John Boosey himself probably looks upon them with a sort of contempt—that is, as an entertainment for intelligent, educated people—because, after all, he does publish operas and good music in addition to his 'pot-boilers.'

"Besides, it is not invariably the ballads that one objects to so much as the weekly deluge of them. Occasionally you get a really good song by Blumenthal or Sullivan or Fred Clay. Everyone can enjoy hearing Sims Reeves sing 'The Message,' or even 'My Pretty Jane,' because no one else can sing them as he does.

"Reeves will not sing a ballad unless he happens to like it," added Mr. Leslie. "Nor will Edward Lloyd—unless, *entre nous*, it happens to be by his friend 'Stephen Adams.' But who can render 'I'll sing thee songs of Araby' or 'Come, Margarita, come,' as Lloyd can? Those are things which the Ballad audiences would rather hear than all the rubbish that forms the staple of the programmes. Only, like the fruit in the greengrocer's shop—the 'spotless' help to sell the 'spotted,' and it takes clever fingers to shuffle them so that you don't notice it."

I agreed: "The trouble is that I, a conscientious critic, am supposed to consume the entire mixture because a greedy public insists upon encoring every item in the programme. Naturally, I don't sit it out. I time my arrival for the first new song, and I depart immediately after the last; though, of course, one doesn't object to Arabella Goddard's piano solo or a male voice quartet."

"Well," concluded Mr. Leslie, "no doubt you are right. But you must not quote me on the subject; I don't want to offend either John Boosey or Ambrose Austin. For let me tell you this: if it were not for the Ballad Concerts, the 'London,' the 'National' and the rest of them, this hall would never be able to pay its shareholders a farthing of dividend!"

Truly, the "ballad craze," with its many evil concomitants, was the puzzle of the time. It had grown to incredible proportions, and at the root of the whole disease, I am ashamed to say, lay the "thirst for gold" which to-day we endeavour to dignify by calling it the "commercial instinct." It was shared by all alike. The more distinguished and popular the artist, the greater the rubbish that he or she consented to tickle the public ear with; not only "to please my dear friend So-and-so, who has written it expressly for me," but with a keen eye to the royalties that would bring them nice fat cheques. At any rate, their honoured names appeared upon the title-pages, and their cheques, I am sure, were honoured too.

It is interesting now to recall how great singers condescended to lower their art in this fashion—when, for example, Christine Nilsson first sang "Let me dream again" at St. James's Hall, accompanied by Arthur Sullivan, "for the benefit of the Westminster Maternity Charity"; when the same composer's "Once again" was first sung by Sims Reeves, his "Sweethearts" by Edward Lloyd, his "Looking back" by Trebelli or Patey, his "Lost Chord" by Antoinette Sterling; or when Mr. (now Sir) Frederic Cowen first accompanied (without music) his famous ballad "It was a dream," the vocalist

being no other than Mme. "Titiens"; or when Adelina Patti brought out one of the many new ballads that she graciously placed in her répertoire side by side with "Home, sweet home" and "The Last Rose of Summer." It was a lucrative business, and the notabilities I have named, with plenty of others, were all in the same basket.

But the greatest gainers, then as to-day, were the publishers; and they made no secret of the fact. Of the old firms which survive, the most prominent by a long way are those which made fortunes by the sale of ballads. I have seen three generations of the Booseys. The first, John Boosey, whom I knew well, was the founder of the London Ballad Concerts. He was a splendid business man, and, in spite of his bluff, imperious manner and self-assertive spirit, was always "approachable," fair in his dealings, careful of his word. His son, Arthur Boosey, carried on the business for many years and maintained its traditions in every respect, as does his grandson Leslie Boosey.

His nephew, William, a man of strong opinions, was with John Boosey for several years; but afterwards he became associated with the firm of Chappells and has been its "head" for over five-and-twenty years. In his youth William Boosey cherished aspirations as a poet and librettist, but had the sense to recognize that his real talent lay in the "commercial" direction. He has abundantly proved it by the success that has attended his metamorphosis of the Chappell business. He has not, in course of the process, attempted to suppress the *genus* ballad—that would be expecting too much. On the other hand, he has manufactured a better class of pianoforte, and he has continued the profitable publication of comic opera scores, though not all of a type to be compared with

the Gilbert and Sullivan masterpieces that issued from the same press.

If the Chappells of the 'fifties built St. James's Hall and ran the Popular Concerts, it is interesting to note that their successors of the twentieth century own Queen's Hall, run the Promenade and Symphony Concerts so ably conducted by Sir Henry Wood, and, generally speaking, exercise a powerful control over musical enterprise in the metropolis. The guiding influence, the autocratic hand which directs the helm of that control is seldom visible, but is constantly felt. Remaining in the background, William Boosey nevertheless pulls all the important strings, and, like Alexander Selkirk, "his right there is none to dispute." This is the state of affairs which the popularity of the ballad has helped to evolve. What other factors, dating back to the 'seventies, have aided to bring about the present musical situation will appear in another chapter.

Meanwhile, it is worth saying a word about the manager of St. James's Hall, Ambrose Austin, who used to supply what I may call national *bourgeois* music to gratify the palates of the *bourgeoisie* at this period of motley tastes. Like a shrewd man, he studied the calendar assiduously, so as to be in a position to book the essential dates before his competitors could "get a look in." St. Patrick's Day, St. Andrew's Day, St. David's Day, sometimes St. George's Day, Easter Monday, Boxing Day, all were, so to speak, Austin's special perquisites.

His chief pabulum was the old familiar ballad of the type which so far represented what we now term the "folk-song" that it was too characteristic to deserve oblivion. The best of these old songs can never die.

They are living now, as they were living then, in the hearts and the throats of the people. The difference to-day is to be found in the singing of them. No longer have we artists like Sims Reeves, Santley, Lloyd, Foli, Andrew Black, Mary Davies, Madame Patey and Antoinette Sterling to lend the touch of their genius to such simple things.

One sympathizes with the modern "high-brow" who prefers not to listen to such old-fashioned stuff even under the most ideal conditions. It was not written for him. But it suited a "gathering of the clans," each on its own particular Saint's Day, the like of which London knows no more. The Irishmen, the Scotsmen, and the Welshmen no longer forgather in their thousands, an hour before the concert, to exchange brotherly greetings and to make the rafters ring with their "unaccompanied songs," all sung in unison. For it was their custom to anticipate the treat in store by religiously going through the whole programme in advance.

Ambrose Austin was virtually the founder of that other hybrid form of musical entertainment so popular in the 'eighties and 'nineties, namely, the "Patti Concert." When the diva was quitting the operatic stage in England, a profitable if unworthy substitute for the exercise of her gifts was invented for her by one George Watts of Brighton, at whose concerts she sang in the provinces once or twice before he died. Then Austin, who had acted as Watts's business manager, took up the running and (in 1886) engaged Patti for four orchestral concerts at the Albert Hall—the only place in London big enough to accommodate the crowds and make the enterprise a lucrative one.* Conducted by Sir Wm. Cusins, the Queen's "Master

* See "The Reign of Patti," by the present author, p. 231.

of the Musick," they proved a huge success, and thenceforward for twenty years the Patti Concert remained a flourishing institution.

There remains to speak of one firm of concert-giving music publishers who did work of more permanent value—I mean Novellos. (Exclude the Pops and the comparison would be beyond dispute!) There was a time—long before the 'seventies—when the name of Novello stood on one hand for the greatest English soprano (Clara Novello); and, on the other, for a sort of English Breitkopf and Härtel with but a single business policy, namely, that of supplying the British public with good music, cheap. The founder of the house was Alfred Novello; its real architect and builder was Henry Littleton.

Henry Littleton was about fifty-five when I first saw him at Berners Street in 1878; though his flowing white beard, ruddy complexion, and gold spectacles gave him the appearance of being older. (He died in 1888, and the centenary of his birth was celebrated at the new Wardour Street building in 1923.) I have described him somewhere as a publisher of small scores but large views. He was a strict man of affairs, but had a kindly nature beneath his stern exterior; and he kept " open house " at Sydenham, where in the 'eighties he entertained in turn Liszt and Dvorák when they visited London. More than all, perhaps, was he fortunate in his two sons, Alfred and Augustus, who both possessed in a singular degree the knack of commingling artistic with commercial considerations. The younger son alone survives and is the present head of the firm.

It was on my return from Liverpool fifty years ago

that the first opportunity occurred for me to realize the tremendous rôle that the Novellos were playing in the musical education of the London public. The Royal Albert Hall, erected by the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851 at the instigation of the Prince Consort, and opened by Queen Victoria in 1871, had originally embraced in its scheme three purposes, viz.:

(*a*) A series of cheap concerts for the people.
(*b*) A society of amateurs of all classes for instrumental music.
(*c*) A National Training School for Music.

The first scheme (*a*) had been expanded in 1872 to absurdly big proportions and proved a failure; the second (*b*) survives in a modified shape; the third (*c*) became in course of time what we now know as the Royal College of Music. Mistake after mistake had to be corrected in the light of experience.

The unpatriotic *faux pas* of inviting Gounod, instead of a British musician, to form and conduct a choir of native singers to fulfil a great national project had been atoned for by the engagement of Joseph Barnby and the formation of the Albert Hall (now the Royal) Choral Society. Then came the chance for the firm of Novello to prove its metal. It started (Easter, 1873) a series of no fewer than two hundred concerts, given daily until the adjacent Exhibition was closed, and including the amazing record of four consecutive performances in Holy Week of Bach's St. Matthew *Passion*. It was the daring spirit of Henry Littleton that rendered such an achievement practicable.

Still more remarkable had been the series of nightly Novello concerts given during the autumn of 1874. To

many of these did I trudge most of the way to Kensington Gore from Bentinck Street, in all winds and weathers. The music was of a high order; the artists were of the best; it was at once an education and a delight to listen to such programmes. The magnitude of an enterprise that included a huge orchestra, two choirs, and five conductors was simply "staggering"; but the pace was too strong to last. This was the other extreme—trying to do too much; and, even had the public been ready for it, the means of locomotion and transit to and from what was then a remote, inaccessible *locale* would have precluded all possibility of making ends meet.

The loss over these ventures was such as only a man of wealth could have stood. And yet it did not deter Henry Littleton and his sons from pursuing their crusade elsewhere. When the father died the sons carried on the firm's valuable propaganda on the same lines, publishing everything, old and new, that was produced at the provincial Festivals and then pushing it for all it was worth by performing it or getting it performed.

Henry Littleton was eventually wise enough to discard the distant Albert Hall as a battle-ground. He could afford to leave his interests there to the Royal Choral Society, seeing that his son Alfred (and after him Augustus) took by right an active part in its direction. So the firm turned its attention to St. James's Hall, formed a choir of its own, and gave a series of "Novello's Oratorio Concerts." At these, under Dr. (afterwards Sir Alexander) Mackenzie, were presented many interesting choral works, including Liszt's oratorio, *St. Elizabeth*, performed in 1886 in the presence of the composer. When they were abandoned, the golden era of choral singing

in central London may be said to have reached its termination.

And the ballads? They are still being sung and sold, though not quite so inane on the average as they were of yore. But St. James's Hall is gone. The last concert there took place in February, 1905, and it was pulled down immediately afterwards.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE VOGUE OF THE ORCHESTRA

Band or Orchestra?—Early Visits to the Crystal Palace—The Fighting Career of Sir August Manns—A Masterful Conductor: Champion of Native Symphonic Music—Letters—The Saturday Concerts at Sydenham—Léon Jehin's Criticism—Covent Garden Promenade Concerts—A Few Red-Letter Events (1875-1887)—Sir Charles Hallé: Pioneer, Pianist, and Conductor—His Work at Manchester—Hallé and Berlioz's *Faust*—The Famous "Compton Benefit"—I Meet Sir Henry Irving—A Polite Note and a Pleasant Talk—Music at the Lyceum—Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Macbeth* Music.

SOME writers date the rise of the orchestral movement in this country from the day when Beethoven dispatched the score of his Ninth Symphony to the Philharmonic Society—and waited anxiously for the remittance of £100 which was to pay him for it. Frankly, I do not think the Philharmonic had much to do with it. That society was an aristocratic institution from its birth, and did not trouble itself about the musical education of the people. It simply performed good music for the delectation of the *dilettanti*. It never set out to instruct the ignorant.

I remember when it was hard to be sure precisely what was meant by the word "orchestra." One knew that it implied a body of instrumentalists of some sort, but as a rule one spoke of the Philharmonic Band, the Covent Garden Band, and even, forsooth, the "Queen's Private Band."

When I was a boy in Norwich I once asked old William Howlett, the music-seller at the corner of the Market-

place, if he could explain to me the difference between a band and an orchestra (he played the 'cello in the local Philharmonic, and had a reputation for stopping to wipe his forehead with a vast handkerchief whenever there was a difficult passage for the 'cellos to surmount). After some hesitation, the old gentleman replied, in his best Norfolk "brogue":

"Well, that ain't easy to du. But I knaow this much—that when we play all by ourselves we're oonly a band; and when we git down the wood-wind and professional strings from London for the Fastivals, we're changed into an orchestra!" And yet, I reflected, they still continue to call you a "band."

To my thinking, Sir George Grove was right when he credited the Crystal Palace Concerts with being the real *fons et origo* of the orchestral development in the British Isles.* When they were started in 1855 we had nothing at all resembling them. They provided the youthful music-lover with an inexhaustible wealth of training and culture; and it was at the Crystal Palace that I first heard a symphony.

Some associate their first visit to the Crystal Palace with music, others with fireworks. I do so with both. It was on a very hot Thursday in July, 1871. I recollect that we had with us a cousin of my father's, Ferdinand Harfeld, who was in the Russian diplomatic service, an attaché of Prince Orloff at the Embassy at Brussels, and in later years Intendant of the Household to the Princess Con-

* In his own article on the subject in "Grove's Dictionary," the original editor wound up with these words:—"The performances were of that exceptional quality which might be inferred from the ability, energy, and devotion of the conductor, and from the fact that owing to the wind and a portion of the strings of the orchestra being the permanent band of the Crystal Palace, Manns had opportunities for rehearsal which were at that time enjoyed by no other conductor in London."

stantine at St. Petersburg. Like ourselves, he loved music; so although we went to Sydenham ostensibly to see the wonderful firework display of Mr. Thomas Brock, we went early in order to listen to the daily concert of the small "permanent band" conducted by Mr. August Manns.

My delight was increased when I found that the principal item in the programme was Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony. That performance was stamped upon my memory for life. I listened to it like one in a dream; it opened up my young mind to possibilities of descriptive power, of exquisite poetic expression, that orchestral music had never held for me before. There was a good sprinkling of young people present, and in after years at the Saturday Concerts I often used to wonder how many of those enthusiastic Sydenham amateurs had begun their symphonic education in the same manner.

Here, I repeat, was the true starting-point of the orchestral "vogue" which has taken best part of seventy years to attain its present full maturity in our land. Here, in the strangest concert-room ever built—a kind of annexe of vast superficial area, with an echoing roof of glass and iron, yet not bad for sound when full (it holds nearly 4,000 persons)—was woven the splendid and absorbing romance of "Music for the People," whereof August Manns was the chief protagonist. He it was who nursed the tender plant in its infancy; who, without ever losing faith, fostered and exploited it until it had reached fruition. His record transcended all others at the most critical period of our national musical development. An unassuming, ill-paid conductor, he worked for the good of his art with a whole-souled devotion that the perennial financial troubles of the Crystal Palace could never quench.

Born in a village near Stettin, of humble parentage, he worked his way up until he became bandmaster of an infantry regiment; and he trained his men to play symphonies by Mozart and Beethoven as well as they could boom out marches and quick-steps. He came over soon after the Crystal Palace was opened, to act as sub-conductor of the military band which then supplied the exclusive musical entertainment. His chief soon retired, and a couple of years after he had succeeded him, the famous Saturday Concerts were started.

When I saw him directing the "Pastoral," sixteen years later, he was in the prime of life, a man of forty-six, with a leonine head of grey hair; tall, upright, alert, with a fierce-looking moustache, suggesting something of the aspect of a drum-major as he wielded his baton with a wide, noble, rhythmic sweep. And, wearing his familiar velvet jacket, his aspect was still the same when I went in 1900 to see him conduct his last Handel Festival. An accomplished musician, he mastered new scores with extraordinary celerity, and, considering that his full Saturday orchestra only gathered for rehearsal on the morning of the concert, the precision and finish which marked the interpretation of fresh works was often astonishing.

Sir August Manns was one of the great pioneers. He did for English music and young English composers what Carl Rosa did for both in the domain of opera. Arthur Sullivan was practically unknown when, in April, 1862, his *Tempest* music at the Crystal Palace won him instant fame. Many another budding British genius owed a similar debt of gratitude, before the century had ended, to the conductor who could perceive their promise and was never known to close the door in their faces.

The number of works of all kinds given at the Saturday

Concerts reached a total of 1,600, of which over 200 were of symphonic form and dimensions, and as many oratorios, masses and cantatas. These were contributed by 350 composers, of whom a third were British, another third German, about 40 French, 30 Italian, and the balance of various nationalities.

In the compiling of attractive programmes Manns had for many seasons a clever coadjutor in Sir George Grove, whose incomparable analytical notes were a joy both to adept and amateur. The novelties never drew a sixpence in those days, though their presence in any scheme inevitably compelled the musical critic to face the tedious railway journey to Sydenham—forty minutes for eight miles! We grumbled, of course, but we went; and very often were well rewarded for doing our duty. One autumn (1891) I ventured, more in joke than real earnestness, to point out (in the *Sunday Times*) that the season's prospectus contained fewer new works than usual, especially of British manufacture. My remark brought from Manns the following characteristic protest, which throws an interesting sidelight on the conditions of the moment:

Crystal Palace, S.E.
*Sept.* 29, 1891.

Dear Mr. Klein,—Why have you been so deliberately uncharitable in your remarks on the prospectus of the next series of Saturday Concerts? We have reduced the number of choral concerts on account of the unsatisfactory financial result which attended them since the last two or three seasons, and more particularly of last winter, when every new choral work by a native composer brought us losses.

In regard to instrumental novelties, I will just say that, neither of the least acknowledged composers of the Continent and of England having produced new works of interest, I had to fall back upon "unacknowledged geniuses," of whom there is a perfectly bewildering

number, but for whose works the visitors at the Concerts do not care. To get out of this trouble respectably I selected small works by promising native youngsters, in order to give that class of aspirants a chance to be enrolled among the dead and living great ones, who are, I think, creditably represented in the first ten programmes. Why such high-art conditions should have called forth your unwelcome "Lamento" is inexplicable to me !—Yours sincerely,

AUGUST MANNS.

One of the most impulsive of men, Manns was also one of the most impetuous and virile of conductors. His fault was that he often allowed his feelings to carry him away; his *tempi* would then accelerate without his knowing it. But, no matter how tremendous the swing of his arm—out of all proportion, occasionally, to the subdued measured tread of the music—his orchestra always understood him, and played neither faster nor louder than he meant them to play. He took enormous pains with new works, and I have many a time heard composers say that at the Crystal Palace they could safely count upon a first-rate interpretation of the most difficult scores.

One conductor's criticism of another is always amusing, often valuable. Unable to attend the sixth concert of the season just referred to, I placed my seats at the disposal of M. Léon Jehin, then as now the gifted *chef-d'orchestre* at Monte Carlo, who was that year conducting Sir Augustus Harris's memorable autumn season of French opera at Covent Garden (at which Bruneau's *Le Rêve* and Gounod's *Philémon et Baucis* were given here for the first time). I quote translated portions of the letter that I afterwards received from M. Jehin:

Hotel Dieudonné, St. James's.
15 *November*, 1891.

DEAR MR. KLEIN,—Allow me to thank you for your kindness in affording me the pleasure of listening to yesterday's fine concert.

The Brahms symphony (No. 1) pleased me immensely. It was exceedingly well played—with great purity of execution and much warmth.

The young pianist has a great deal of talent and a finished technique. I thought her rendering of the Schumann concerto rather cold—very neat, very precise, but a trifle lacking in expression. What she did play perfectly was the Staccato Study in C of Rubinstein. She is still very young, I fancy. She will improve, and gain above all in the quality essential to every artist—I mean expression.*

The tenor was perfect. He has a beautiful voice, admirable diction, refined style; and one feels that he knows how to sing this kind of music, so broad and dignified in its simplicity.†

Mr. Manns is a remarkable conductor. He has great authority, vigour, and accuracy (*correction*). He led everything perfectly and with the utmost care. If I may be permitted one small criticism, it seemed to me that he took the Prelude to the *Meistersinger* much too fast; it sounded meaningless (*cela ne disait plus rien*); it was lacking in breadth. But, of course, this opinion is quite personal, and I give it you wholly in that sense. . . . Again thanking you,

Yours,

LÉON JEHIN.

At one time Manns supplemented his labours at the Palace by conducting the concerts of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Choral Unions. He began his duties in the north in 1884, and he wrote me a letter from Glasgow telling me that the concerts were making "a thoroughly successful start. The orchestra is in every way remarkably efficient, and its playing found its way to the hearts of the thousands who crowded the concert-rooms on both evenings." He fulfilled this double task for many years, but eventually resigned his Scottish post because he found

* She did so beyond a doubt. The pianist in question was Miss Fanny Davies.

† The singer was Edward Lloyd, and he sang in this instance an air from Gluck's *Iphigénie* and Wagner's "Preislied." His delivery of the latter, Hans Richter used to declare, never had been and never could be surpassed.

the work too heavy. He revelled, nevertheless, in hard work, and, when he succeeded Costa as conductor of the Handel Festival and had to rehearse his huge choral contingents at Exeter Hall, the labour of preparation was not a burden, but a source of real pleasure.

His instinct for fairness was as quickly aroused on behalf of others as for himself. I complained once because two new pieces by Eugen D'Albert, which he was to have conducted on an afternoon when he was also appearing as solo pianist, were withdrawn at the last moment "without explanation." I felt that the audience would naturally resent any lack of courtesy on the part of D'Albert, who had so often spoken slightingly of the musical taste of the British public. On the following day Manns wrote me this letter:

Crystal Palace, S.E.
*Nov. 7th*, 1897.

Dear Mr. Klein,—The enclosed letter from Mme. D'Albert will at least partly explain the reason for the withdrawal of the two orchestral pieces of her husband. That he should have preferred to drop the composer in favour of the pianist on this occasion deserves praise. One rehearsal, and that one on the day on which he had to play Beethoven's G major concerto, would have been insufficient for his elaborate compositions, and the worry and anxiety caused through hurried rehearsing would have upset him and done harm to his piano playing. Moreover, as it turned out, the publishers were not able to provide the score and parts in time for careful preparation.

Let me add that the concert benefited by the alteration of the programme. D'Albert's playing was marvellously beautiful. I have never heard such a lovely rendering of Beethoven's G major concerto. It was sweet poetry from the beginning to the very last bar. I am very sorry you were not present. The orchestra, not being harassed by new compositions and a new conductor, played

with spirit and refinement throughout the concert, and I felt very happy when all was over.—Yours sincerely,

AUGUST MANNS.

Two years before this we celebrated his seventieth birthday by a reception in his honour at the Grafton Galleries; and that night, when he replied to Sir George Grove's address of congratulation, he looked and spoke like a proud, serious, yet withal modest musician. For beneath the imposing exterior there beat the kindly, generous heart of one who "loved his neighbour." Altogether Sir August Manns was a remarkable type, and the cause of music in this country owes him a lasting debt of gratitude. He died in 1907.

Meanwhile, in the centre of the metropolis the understanding and appreciation of the classics were extending so slowly that at the end of the 'seventies orchestral music stood little higher in popular estimation. The supply was irregular, too spasmodic. The Philharmonic Society was drawing a new professional element to St. James's Hall in place of the aristocratic subscribers who had supported it at the Hanover Square Rooms. Sir Michael Costa had gone; and in W. G. Cusins the Society was presided over by the last (and least inspiring) of its "white-kid-glove" conductors.

The "New Philharmonic," run by Dr. Henry Wylde and Mr. Wilhelm Ganz, appealed only to the select few. It was there, however, that Londoners listened to many interesting novelties, and first heard players like Hans von Bülow and Camille Saint-Saëns in conjunction with an orchestra.

Remained the Promenade Concerts, then being held at Covent Garden. The floor of the auditorium was raised

to the level of the stage; and a square band-stand, something like a broad ancient hustings, was erected immediately below the proscenium to accommodate solo artists, a full orchestra, a military band, and frequently a numerous choir as well. Here were performed before nightly crowds a most extraordinary variety of programmes, ranging from a Beethoven symphony to a quick-march, from an oratorio to the musical *olla podrida* known as "The British Army Quadrilles." And from the back of the stage came an intermittent *feu de joie*, fired by a battery of champagne corks and soda-water bottles.

Still, it was a far cry from the "Proms" *à la Musard*, started at the Lyceum Theatre in 1838, to those conducted by Arditi, Hervé, and Rivière at Covent Garden when I first went to them. Things greatly improved under the management of the Gattis; better music was being played, even whilst Levy and Howard Reynolds yet reigned supreme in their chair of state as executants of amazingly lofty flights on the *cornet-à-pistons*. What interested me more was the tone of the new Wagner tubas used in the "Trauermarsch" from *Götterdämmerung*, heard for the first time in England at these concerts under Arditi.

When Sir Arthur Sullivan and Sir Frederic Cowen conducted we had "classical" nights, "Wagner" nights, and "Beethoven" nights regularly every week; and the same system was followed when Mr. Freeman Thomas took over the management and Mr. Gwyllym Crowe the conductorship. Thus, slowly but surely, the foundation was being laid for the work of Sir Henry Wood and Robert Newman and the superior Proms of a later day. From these modest beginnings the taste for good orchestral music among all classes of the community was

to develop into the veritable passion that it has now become.

Beyond a doubt, the succession of phenomena that aroused curiosity in the musical world of the 'seventies and 'eighties was the most momentous, as regards its influence over the future, that has ever presented itself in this country. Without it the tale of our present achievement would be practically non-existent.

I would like, therefore, to enumerate a few of the outstanding events of that period, some of which I have already described, while others still bide their turn. Leaving the work of the Crystal Palace and the Popular Concerts out of consideration—they being institutions that were constantly contributing to the harvest—here is my list:—

1875 Production of *Lohengrin* at Covent Garden.
Carl Rosa's first London season.
Verdi's "Requiem" at the Albert Hall.
1876 Verdi's *Aïda* at Covent Garden.
Foundation of the Bach Choir.
National Training School for Music opened.
Production of *Tannhäuser* at Covent Garden
1877 Wagner Festival at the Albert Hall.
The coming of Hans Richter.
First Gilbert and Sullivan Opera (*The Sorcerer*).
Hans von Bülow Recitals begun.
Brahms's First Symphony at Cambridge.
1878 Production of *Carmen* at Her Majesty's.
Berlioz's *Damnation de Faust* (in French) under Pasdeloup.
1879 Richter Concerts started.
Bach's Mass in B minor first sung here.
1880 Berlioz's *Faust* under Hallé at St. James's Hall.
Opening of the Guildhall School of Music.

1882 First German Opera Season in London.
*Nibelungen* produced at Her Majesty's.
Gounod's *Redemption* produced at Birmingham Festival.
1883 English Opera (Carl Rosa) at Drury Lane.
Opening of the Royal College of Music.
Production of Dvorák's *Stabat Mater*.
1884 Berlioz's *Faust* at Albert Hall.
1885 Wagner's *Parsifal* at Albert Hall.
1886 Liszt's Farewell Visit.
Rubinstein's "Historical" Recitals.
1887 Revival of Opera begun under Augustus Harris.

Outside the metropolitan field during this same period the strongest influence ever wielded by a single musician in the North of England radiated from the activities of Sir Charles Hallé. He was one of the most prodigious workers I have known. During the greater part of the year he used to spend his mornings practising the piano, rehearsing his orchestra, and planning tours; his afternoons giving recitals; his evenings conducting concerts; his nights sleeping in an hotel bed or a railway carriage. Yet work cannot have killed him, since he enjoyed good health as a rule and lived until he was 76. His capacity for mental and physical exertion was equalled by his sustained interest in whatever concerned his art; and he was painstaking to the last degree.*

In Manchester, Liverpool, and the big provincial towns he was looked upon as the great conductor as well as the great pianist. In London his name was chiefly

* Born in Westphalia, he began his career as a piano prodigy at the age of four; he studied at Darmstadt and Paris (under Kalkbrenner), and before he was twenty was the companion of such musicians as Chopin, Berlioz, Cherubini, Liszt, and Thalberg. Escaping to England from the Revolution of 1848, he settled down at Manchester, became (in 1850) conductor of the Gentlemen's Concerts, founded the St. Cecilia Society, and in 1857 formed his celebrated orchestra. Hence his long and close connexion with the great Lancashire city.

associated with his instrument; he was the hero of the Hallé Pianoforte Recitals at St. James's Hall, a new form of musical entertainment at which sober, classical playing could be admired, studied, and imitated. At these and at the Pops he was regarded as the correct model for the conscientious young lady student. He had an excellent technique and mastered difficulties with ease, though on the whole I thought he had a slightly hard touch and was lacking in warmth. I recollect hearing him play Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" sonata, Op. 106, and, compared with Hans von Bülow's rendering the difference was striking: Hallé's straightforward, plodding and cold; von Bülow's full of colour and individuality, a big broad reading, clear-cut and strong; perhaps a trifle cold too, but infinitely more interesting.

Still, Hallé the conductor had some alluring qualities. He had derived the secret of securing smoothness with clearly marked rhythm from his friend Habeneck, the well-known director of the Paris Conservatoire, who made his acquaintance one night in the street through hearing him whistle a theme from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Hallé was also in a particular degree the friend and profound admirer of Berlioz. Above all, he knew and loved the *Damnation de Faust*, albeit his performance of this at Manchester in 1880 was not actually the "first given in England," as stated in the earlier editions of Grove. That honour belonged to the talented French conductor, M. Pasdeloup, by whom the greater portion of his countryman's *chef-d'œuvre* was given at Her Majesty's Theatre, in the original language, in June, 1878.* I was present,

* Parts of the *Damnation de Faust* had been previously heard in London under the direction of Berlioz himself. He gave Acts I and II at Drury Lane Theatre in February, 1848, and a further selection on June 29th. He also conducted at the New Philharmonic Concerts at Exeter Hall a copious selection, sung to Chorley's translation, on June 9th, 1852.

and recall Minnie Hauk's fine singing in the part of Margaret.

The age of the "star" conductor was still to come. Von Bülow and Richter had scarcely opened our eyes as yet to the extraordinary fascination of the *nouveau art*, which was to place the *chef-d'orchestre virtuose* upon a lofty pedestal side by side with the *primo tenore* and the illustrious fiddler. But the psychological moment was near at hand, and Charles Hallé recognized the fact. One understands the ambition which then seized him to shine in London with something of his provincial glory; he wanted to be seen at St. James's Hall with his Manchester orchestra and to let Londoners learn how Berlioz's *Damnation de Faust* would sound under his baton.

He gave them (May 21st, 1880) a delightful experience; an admirable ensemble and a truly ideal interpretation of Berlioz's work. But after ten years of pecuniary loss (in course of which he also conducted the final seasons of the Sacred Harmonic Society), he bowed to the inevitable and abandoned these annual visits with his Manchester orchestra.

Sir Charles Hallé, besides giving recitals and teaching (he confessed that he took too many pupils), organized chamber concerts (complaining, however, that only his wealthy patrons supported them), and he gave concerts with his orchestra four or five times a week during five months of the year. He took a prominent part in organizing the Royal Manchester College of Music, and when that admirably managed institution was opened in 1893 (two years before he died) he was its first Principal. His marriage, *en secondes noces*, with Mme. Norman-Néruda, the gifted "Queen of

violinists," as we used to call her, was in every way a happy union.

Here I pause for a moment to set down one or two reminiscences that belong to the particular decades I have been recalling.

It was in the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre, on March 1st, 1877, that I was introduced to Henry Irving. He was there to contribute his mite to the programme of the memorable "Compton Benefit" by reciting that lugubrious poem, "The Uncle." I had scarcely had time to tell him of my good luck in having seen him ten years before in *Hunted Down*, when the call-boy came to fetch him. He was a wonderful reciter, thanks to his magnetic gift of instantly creating an atmosphere; and I liked him better in "The Uncle" than in "Eugene Aram" because it brought his mannerisms less into relief.

That day Drury Lane was packed to the ceiling, and enthusiasm was at fever heat; for the occasion was a very notable one. A superb comedian of the old school, Henry Compton—father of the actor, Edward Compton; grandfather of my pupil, Fay Compton, and of my friend Compton Mackenzie, the gifted novelist—had served his public faithfully for half a century, and to do him honour there was a wonderful programme. Let me mention a few of the items.

After the Council scene from *Othello*, played by Creswick and Ada Cavendish, came the first act of Lytton's comedy, *Money*, with three favourites in the cast who are still living—Dame Ellen Terry (Georgina Vesey), Mrs. Kendal (Clara Douglas), and Sir Squire Bancroft (a Servant); while the Lady Franklin was Lady Bancroft, then still known as Marie Wilton. Benjamin Webster

played his original part of Graves, and Edward Compton made his London début in a minor rôle. In the last act of *The Critic* Charles Mathews emerged from his retirement to play Puff, H. J. Byron was the Dangle, John Clayton the Sneer, Toole the Whiskerandos, Edward Terry the Hatton, and Nelly Farren the Tilburina; other parts being filled by such popular actors and actresses as Buckstone, John Clarke, G. W. Anson, E. Righton, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, Mrs. Hermann Vezin, and Mrs. Chippendale. In addition, Jefferson (Rip van Winkle) appeared in the farce of *Lend me Five Shillings;* while Phelps and Vezin acted a scene from *The Man of the World.*

Finally we had *Trial by Jury* with a cast which Arthur Sullivan (who conducted) used to declare was "more remarkable for the crowd than the principals." The latter, nevertheless, comprised George Honey as the Judge, George Fox as the Counsel, W. H. Cummings as the Defendant, Arthur Cecil as the Usher, and Pauline Rita as the Plaintiff. The thirty-two jurymen and twenty bridesmaids were all celebrities, and among the "fair ones" still happily with us were Miss Marion Terry and Miss Lottie Venne.

I had published Irving's portrait in the *Operatic and Dramatic Album*, and in later years I tried to obtain an "interview" from him. But the watchful Bram Stoker—a veritable Cerberus—was not willing to oblige. I rather resented this, and the consequence was that I missed two or three interesting first-nights at the Lyceum, though I saw Irving sooner or later in every part he played. Eventually matters between Stoker and myself came to a head, and I determined to complain to Irving about it. He wrote me a prompt reply:

15A, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W.
*27th May*, 1885.

DEAR MR. KLEIN,—Thank you for your kind letter, and I'm sorry anything so unfortunate should have occurred as you describe. I will see that in future you are better looked after at the Lyceum, and I have added your name to our first night list.

Thinking you may be able to use them, I enclose seats for to-morrow night.—Very truly yours, HY. IRVING.

After this things went smoothly enough. I made it up with Stoker, and was always invited round to the stage with the crowd of personal friends whom the great actor entertained in lavish style after every first production. I also contrived to get a chat with him in his dressing-room one evening between acts, in order to talk over a musical topic of some importance. He was then mounting various Shakespearean plays without incidental music other than that provided by his regular conductor, Meredith Ball. It had always seemed to me to be a great opportunity lost, and I ventured to tell him so.

"Never mind," said Irving, "I am going to make up for it now. Before this year (1888) is out I hope to revive *Macbeth*, and *not* with Lock's music."

"With whose music, then?" I asked.

"With Arthur Sullivan's. He has promised me to write it during the summer, and you may look for the production at about Christmas." (The actual date was December 29th.)

"Splendid!" I exclaimed. "That is really doing something worth while for native music; worthy of Shakespeare and worthy of yourself." Then an idea occurred to me. This was the year of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, the year after *Ruddigore*, two years after *The Golden Legend*. Sullivan was now in the very prime of his powers,

and everyone was remarking upon the increasing command of colour and strength that was coming into his music. He was often ill, but he was revelling in his work. Only a few days before, he had himself told me what special pains he intended taking with the score of *The Yeomen*, and that he meant, if there was time, to write for it an overture in regular form. (Which he ultimately did; and a little masterpiece it is.) It was this which gave me my idea:

"Do you mind, Mr. Irving, if I make a suggestion? It is that you ask Sir Arthur to provide his *Macbeth* music with a full overture. It ought to have one, and he will not hesitate if you ask him."

"Why not?" said the actor, as he rose to obey the call-boy. "Overtures to tragedies, I suppose, have gone out of fashion a little since Beethoven wrote the *Coriolanus* and Mendelssohn the *Ruy Blas;* but what they thought worth doing I am sure that Sullivan will think worth doing too. Thanks for the suggestion!"

In due time the overture formed a conspicuous feature of the finest incidental music that the composer of the *Tempest* music ever wrote. It was not heard to the best advantage at the Lyceum, particularly at the première, where the din of conversation was always exceptionally bad. But in the following year, when the greater part of the *Macbeth* music was performed at the Leeds Festival under the composer's direction, the overture especially made a deep impression. I wrote at the time: "As will be readily imagined, Sir Arthur Sullivan's delicate scoring and subtle effects came out in a far truer aspect and with more telling force than in the theatre." Yet to-day, despite the revival of interest in Sullivan's operas, this beautiful music is seldom if ever heard.

# CHAPTER X

## WAGNER AND THE COMING OF HANS RICHTER

(THE VOGUE OF THE ORCHESTRA, CONTINUED)

Preparing for the Wagner Festival—Hail to the Music of the Future! —Hermann Franke: the Obscure *Deus ex machina*—Discussions at Bentinck Street—A Notable Wagner Reception—George Eliot's Remark—Wagner's Breakdown at Rehearsal—Richter to the Rescue —A Glorious New Conductor—Wagner and the Critchetts—How his Headaches were Cured—Letters from Cosima Wagner and Manuel Garcia—Richter Starts his Concerts—He Revolutionizes Audiences and Conductors—Also Criticizes Wagner's Critics—The End of Franke—Richter's Art—Weist-Hill at the Alexandra Palace—Cheap Musical Performances and Training—The Guildhall School of Music Started.

THE next turn of the wheel was of historic import. By the middle of the 'seventies the "vogue of the orchestra," as I have termed it, had made considerable progress. Indeed, so excellently had the ground been laid by Manns and Hallé that considerable sections of the middle-class communities had been weaned from their miserable diet of ballads and show pieces and taught to appreciate music that appealed to a higher order of intelligence. Thus, the portion of the London public which was expected to exhibit a practical interest in the Wagner Festival of 1877 was "trained to the hour." The trouble was that it was not large enough to ensure the anticipated profit.

To the "man in the street" the advanced theories of the Wagnerian school still represented the "Music of the Future"; and that sort he preferred to leave for his descendants to enjoy. Another thing. A feeling was

beginning to take root that something ought to be done to emancipate this country from the yoke of the musical foreigner, which had lain heavily on it for best part of two centuries. Would not such a feeling affect considerably the amount of support likely to be forthcoming for an enterprise to be headed by the redoubtable Wagner in person?

It was a knotty problem; but its solution, as the event has proved, was to exercise a far-reaching effect upon the development of music in this land. Let me tell how it came about.

Early in 1876 there came to live with us at Bentinck Street a young German violinist named Hermann Franke, who had earned some reputation as a quartet-player and occasionally gave chamber concerts with other artists of his own nationality such as Ernst Schiever and Robert Hausmann, who subsequently became better known than himself. A pupil of Joachim, he had also studied with August Wilhelmj, the famous fiddler with the magnificent organ-like tone. Wilhelmj and Franke were close friends. I had often heard the former at the Promenade Concerts; but in 1876 he did not come to England, being occupied night and day with the approaching inauguration of the new Bayreuth Theatre, where he was to lead the orchestra.

That portentous event took place in the month of August, and the Bayreuth Festival, which only lasted ten days (from the 13th to the 23rd), resulted in a deficit of £7,000. Wagner's disappointment was indescribable; but his chagrin was not to end there, if indeed, anywhere, except the grave (which it did seven years later). Plans were discussed for making up the loss by giving a number of "Festival Concerts" in various European capitals, one of which was to be London.

At first Wagner objected to coming here. He had not forgotten the disagreeable experience of 1855, when, as conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts, he had managed to offend and quarrel with nearly everybody. Ultimately, however, he gave way; whereupon Wilhelmj wrote off to Franke to ask him to bestir himself in the matter and to let him know by return what arrangements could be made for holding a Festival in London.

So, by a curious chance, the question of a Wagner Festival in London was submitted to the German violinist who was the occupant of a room on the second floor of our dwelling in Bentinck Street. He had now been with us several months and we had become good friends; what more natural than that he should explain the whole affair to me and ask my opinion? I was by this time nearly as ardent a Wagnerite as himself, and I told him that, provided the big undertaking were properly managed, I thought there ought to be sufficient support forthcoming for it to pay. That being Franke's own view, he posted a favourable reply to Wilhelmj that very afternoon.

A few days later we had another conversation. "The Festival," he said, "is to take place at the Albert Hall next May. Wagner will conduct most of it, but Hans Richter is coming over to help him, as the work will be rather hard. Wilhelmj will be the first violin, and I shall play with him at the leader's desk. There will be an orchestra of two hundred."

"Excellent! But you don't tell me the most important thing. Who is going to undertake the management of the business?"

"It will be in the hands of a well-known London firm, who have promised to take a large share in the financial responsibility. Their name is Hodge and Essex."

I could hardly believe my ears. Hodge and Essex were the London agents for the sale of the "Estey" American organs. I had never heard of them in connexion with a concert enterprise of any description; but they were big advertisers, and I concluded that they had seen in this association with Wagner a fine chance for placing their name and their American organs "in the limelight." Among other conditions a substantial sum in cash was to be paid to the master for his personal services.

I did not disguise from Franke that I regarded the employment of inexperienced managers as a mistake. It proved to be only the first mistake of many. Worst of all, the prices were fixed upon an excessively high scale, and during the weeks that intervened before the date of the Festival, it began to dawn upon some of these sanguine folk that tickets were not going off so freely as they should. Yet I perceived no signs of hesitancy, no efforts to reduce expenditure. The advertising, printing, fees to artists, etc., were generous in the extreme; and the analytical programmes were to be the most elaborate and costly ever seen. By the time the whole of the Bayreuth *personnel* had arrived, including the great little man himself, the budget of expenses and liabilities had crept up to giddy heights.

Wagner went to stay with his friend, Edward Dannreuther, who lived in Orme Square, Bayswater, facing Hyde Park. He was accompanied by his wife, Liszt's daughter, the much-discussed "Frau Cosima." An interesting reception was given there in his honour a night or two before the Festival, and attended by a crowd of well-known people. Wagner shook hands with everybody, myself included, and smiled in his most affable manner. He

HANS RICHTER

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was looking, nevertheless, rather tired and careworn; the smile, I noticed, was apt to die away quickly.

Among those who sat down to converse with his wife was the distinguished novelist George Eliot, whom I then saw for the first and only time; and she was accompanied, of course, by her husband, George Henry Lewes. She was very simply dressed, and I thought her decidedly plain. When she spoke to Cosima, however, her countenance lighted up with a good-humoured expression. I was amused to learn subsequently that among other things she had said to Frau Wagner, "Your husband does not like a Jew. My husband is one!"*

Among the members of Wagner's *entourage* present on May 5th at the Dannreuther reception (and also at the supper given on the previous night in his honour by Hodge and Essex at their show-rooms in Argyll Street, where I was presented to him) was Hans Richter, the new Hungarian conductor, who had already won fame at Vienna and Bayreuth and was now to assist the master in directing the concerts at the Albert Hall. I was introduced to him by Franke, and his hearty handshake and the open, fearless expression of his eyes prepossessed me in his favour. Thick-set and broad-shouldered, slightly below medium height, his beard square-cut and of a golden-brown tinge, he wore spectacles and spoke with boisterous vivaciousness in a broad Viennese dialect. He had then just turned thirty-four.

This was the man who was to save the Wagner Festival from disaster, to create for us a new orchestral standard, to give us fresh ideas on orchestral conducting, and, generally speaking, to change the course of musical taste in this

* This surprising anecdote was related by Dr. Francis Hueffer, who probably had it from Frau Cosima herself.

country. He began chatting about Wagner with Franke. Wilhelmj came up and joined them, and one could see from their anxious glances at the *Meister* that they were still talking about him. Franke afterwards told me that they were much concerned about him; he had been extremely nervous and irritable at rehearsal. Could it be that a financial failure was even now in sight?

The storm did not burst, however, until the very eve of the Festival, in fact at the final rehearsal, which I had been invited to attend. I had never seen Wagner conduct, and was anticipating it with the liveliest curiosity. Would the greatest living authority on the art of conducting prove himself an equally great exponent thereof? The two hundred players who cheered him as he took his place were clearly ready to do anything he might ask. Why, then, did he hesitate to raise his baton? Yet hesitate he did; or, rather, he raised and lowered it twice or three times before he actually gave the signal for the start. He seemed in doubt as to whether all the men in an orchestra of such vast size were ready to dash into the tempestuous Vanderdecken *motif* that begins the overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer*.

Twice a fresh start had to be made. Wagner grew more nervous and flurried every instant. Then, after more stoppages, he turned and said something to old Herr Deichmann (the faithful leader of the second violins), who was assisting Mr. Edward Dannreuther to translate the master's observations to the orchestra. His next gesture was to beckon to Richter, who was standing near.

"I cannot go on," Wagner said to him, handing him the baton, "you take it." He then went down from the platform to the arena and sat there facing the orchestra, looking very glum and dejected, whilst Richter continued

the rehearsal. The change was magical. Under that strong, clear, unhesitating beat the very tone of the instruments seemed to take on a different hue; the animation of the players revived as their spirits rose, and the music went splendidly.

After this experience Wagner decided to conduct only one or, at most, two pieces at the first, perhaps at every concert, and leave the remainder of the programme to his willing and able disciple. But it was thought better that he should not be away from the platform; so there he remained during each entire concert, seated in an arm-chair facing the audience, maintaining a stony stare and a Sphinx-like expression that I shall never forget.

Doubtless Wagner felt very keenly the humiliation of the position; nor was his temper improved by the fact that the Festival was not being adequately supported. Its artistic success was in the present instance no consolation; he had not come all the way to London merely for that. But towards the end the sight of two or three big audiences, filling that huge auditorium, though at reduced prices, really did cheer him up. Finally he returned to Bayreuth with some English money in his pocket, while subsequently a series of performances at Munich served to pay off the debt on his theatre.

At the time of his visit to London, Wagner was a constant sufferer from severe headaches, for which his German doctors had found no remedy. Dannreuther advised him to try wearing glasses, and with that view he went to Harley Street to consult the famous oculist, Mr. George Critchett, a staunch adherent of his cause, who had visited him at Wahnfried the previous summer when the Bayreuth Theatre was opened. I give the story as it was related

to me by Mr. Critchett's daughter, then Mrs. Amy Boursot (now Mrs. Oblein), an old pupil of Manuel Garcia and, like her father and her brother (the talented Sir Anderson Critchett, who died in February, 1925), extremely musical.

When Wagner entered the dining-room at 21, Harley Street, the first thing he noticed was the bust of himself (still in Mrs. Oblein's possession), standing in the corner, the pedestal hidden in a mass of lovely blooms. He was naturally delighted, but, as he spoke no English and Mr. Critchett spoke no German, not much was said until young Anderson came in and undertook the duties of interpreter. Wagner quickly realized that he was in the hands of an ardent admirer as well as a gifted surgeon. He described his trouble and was immensely pleased to learn that it would be speedily relieved by the use of Mr. Critchett's spectacles. Vowing constant friendship for all the family, he went away much happier than he had come. In due course the new glasses followed Wagner to Germany.

But what happened subsequently to the visit is best explained by a letter which Frau Cosima Wagner wrote (in English) to Mrs. Boursot, who has granted me permission to reproduce it here:

Ems, *July (? June) 29th*, 1877.

Dear Miss Critchett, or better, Dear Mrs. Boursot,—Please to transmit our very best thanks to your father for his kindness; the spectacles arrived very safely, and if my husband broke the one for music on the first day of its arrival, it was his fault, or if you prefer, the fault of fortune, but not of packing. Would you kindly ask your father for the number so that we could be able to have it renewed in Germany. My husband is delighted with his spectacles and quite comforted by them.

He thanks very much also for the prescription and will use it

as soon as his nights—which, thank God, have got much better here—will again be agitated.

We leave Ems on the 5th of July for a tour through Switzerland; end of July we will be in Bayreuth; letters and messages are forwarded to us from there. With our united best regards to Mr. Critchett and to yourself,—Believe me, dear Mrs. Boursot, truly yours,

C. Wagner.

The friendship thus begun lasted until Wagner's death. The correspondence includes another letter from Frau Cosima, in which she thanks Mrs. Boursot for a "beautiful book" sent to Siegfried (then a boy of seven), and one from the latter, carefully written in childish English copper-plate, which mentions "our beautiful big dog, whose name is Marke, that draws a sledge very fast round and round the garden." And, finally, the following interesting letter, acknowledging a reply to one of the bitter attacks on Wagner, which were so common at that period:

Villa d'Angri (Naples).

*March 18th*, 1880.

Dear Mrs. Boursot,—I am very thankful to you for having sent me the January number of the *Theatre Magazine*, and I read with pleasure your warm and intelligent answer to the *Musical Times*.

Now the "Beethoven" of my husband has appeared in the excellent translation of Mr. Dannreuther in London, and I am anxious to see which [? what] impression this capital work will make on its English readers. I wonder, for instance, what Sir [*sic*] Th. Carlyle, who has written on Music some of the deepest things, would say to such a work. And, speaking of Carlyle, would you be able to send me two photographs of him, one of a younger time and one of his old age?

Please, dear Mrs. Boursot, to forward our regards to your father and to receive for yourself our compliments of devoted feelings.

C. Wagner.

Two years later Mr. Critchett was present at the first production of *Parsifal*, and so deep was the impression it made on him, that, when he lay dying he asked his daughter in the early dawn to play some of the themes from it upon the piano to solace him in his pain. He expired with the music of *Parsifal* in his ears.

Next to Wagner, the musician whose friendship gave him most pleasure was Manuel Garcia, to whom he always said he was particularly indebted for having helped him to dissuade his son Anderson from becoming a professional singer instead of an oculist. When the British laryngological societies united in 1878 to present a massive silver service of plate to the distinguished musician who invented the laryngoscope, the ceremony took place in that same Harley Street dining-room where Wagner had caught sight of his bust the previous year. Professor Huxley made the presentation speech, and amongst the gathering, to do honour to their teacher, were Antoinette Sterling and Charles Santley.

Twenty-seven years afterwards, on March 17th, 1905, Sir Anderson Critchett and his sister of course attended the Garcia Centenary Banquet at the Hotel Cecil. I was unfortunately in New York at that time, but cabled congratulations to my venerable master and sent him a long letter, to which the following (in English for a wonder) came in reply:

Mon Abri, Cricklewood,
7 *April*, 1905.

Dear Mr. Klein,—Your letter has given me more pleasure than a quantity of flattering and honorific writing that I have received; the one is the spontaneous prompting of the heart, the others the production of the will.

I hope that one of your early visits in London will be to Mon Abri, where you will be received most cordially.—Your old friend,

M. Garcia.

This was the last time but one that he wrote to me; but the last letter he ever wrote was addressed to my brother Charles, in May, 1906, congratulating him on the success of his play, *The Lion and the Mouse*. That I do not reproduce here because it has already been quoted by Mr. Sterling Mackinlay in his biography, "Garcia, the Centenarian, and his Times."

But to return to Hans Richter. Thanks to his genius and his indefatigable labour, reinforced by the loyal efforts of the original Bayreuth singers, with their superb voices and declamation, this strange Festival had proved a revelation. It had thrown a light upon new art-forms that had not yet wholly emerged from the obscurity of their native haunts. It was to awaken fresh musical desires and aspirations which could only be satisfied through the medium of the same magnetic personality.

Never before had London beheld an orchestral conductor of this type—this quiet, dignified, unobtrusive man with the Barbarossa beard and blue eyes, who knew the whole of the Wagner scores by heart and never required a note of music, who conducted more by glance than by gesture, who could play practically every instrument in the orchestra, who could command faultless precision and grace of execution, whose crescendos and climaxes combined sonority and grandeur with the most perfect balance. The man and the method were alike new to us. His memory alone gave the impression of something miraculous; and time was to enhance that impression as we gradually realized that he had in his head, as open

books, dozens of other scores, including the whole of the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms.

When the Wagner Festival was over and tongues were loosened, one heard it openly suggested that the *Meister*, though outwardly grateful, had been in reality rather jealous of Richter's remarkable triumph. Franke stoutly denied the possibility of such a thing; and I agreed with him, for the reason that Richard Wagner, small-minded though he might be in certain matters, occupied a pedestal so remote and lofty, and was so carefully shielded by his wife and his adoring retainers from the gibes of the world, that it would have been out of the question for a man in his state of mind to conceive such sentiments as envy or jealousy against any living soul. Then, again, the modesty of Richter was so extraordinary that he always conveyed to his well-loved chief the idea that he was performing a simple duty, not a *tour de force*.

For a while life jogged along in the regions of opera and orchestra as though nothing had happened that was worth remembering. Then Hermann Franke's brain began to get to work again. The unpractical, well-intentioned muddler who was primarily to be credited with an ill-organized undertaking that was nevertheless an achievement of historic value, suddenly bethought him once more of Hans Richter.

Franke was no longer living at Bentinck Street; but when I met him one day in the spring of 1879 he told me that there was a scheme on foot, which had the support of the wealthiest German and Austrian music-lovers in London, for giving a series of Orchestral Festival Concerts, conducted by Richter, at St. James's Hall in the following May and June. The position of leading violin was to

be shared by Franke and Schiever, and the band was to be a picked one, consisting of about half English, half foreign players.

Thus came into existence the world-famous "Richter Concerts," so remarkable for their ideal performances of Wagner, Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms, which speedily brought their renowned leader to the forefront of his art in our midst. The concerts were from the first an unequivocal success. Amateurs came from all parts to see Richter conduct, not only to enjoy his readings of the masters I have named, but in course of time to hear him direct new works by native composers, such as Villiers Stanford, Frederic Cowen and Hubert Parry.

As the years went on, Richter's hold on the public grew stronger; he became more and more a familiar personality. He had come just at the right moment. He set to work to conquer our insularities, broaden our sympathies, increase our appreciation of beauty in music, whatever the school. He learned to love his English friends so well that at last he came to live amongst them. In 1885 he succeeded Costa as conductor of the Birmingham Festival. In 1897 he took over the direction of the Hallé Orchestra and went to reside at Manchester, where he held absolute musical control until his death.

I saw a good deal of Richter during the season of German opera which he conducted at Drury Lane in May and June, 1882. He directed the first performances here of *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde;* and remarkably fine they were, alike as to the singing and the orchestral playing. (Indeed, they have never been surpassed, though Richter himself was responsible later for many admirable representations of *The Ring* at Covent Garden, both in German and in English.) The prime instigator of that

memorable season of 1882 was again the persevering Franke, who organized it in conjunction with Sir Augustus Harris and Pollini, the Hamburg impresario. Franke and Pollini were the joint directors, and the prospectus bore the device: "Herr Hermann Franke has the honour to announce the following arrangements," etc.

He brought Richter to tea at my flat one afternoon shortly after the glorious production of *Tristan und Isolde* (with Winkelmann, Gura, Rosa Sucher, and Marianne Brandt in the cast), which, for more than one reason, formed the principal topic of our conversation. Seeing it upon the stage, instead of merely hearing snatches in the concert-room, had completely altered my opinion of this hitherto unfamiliar work, and I had made my public *apologia* to Wagner in the previous issue of the *Sunday Times*. Evidently Richter had read it, for he began:

"I am glad to see you have changed your mind about *Tristan*. You are not the first. But you are younger as a critic than my friend Eduard Hanslick (Wagner's doughty Viennese opponent). He also altered his views about certain works some time ago, but has not yet overcome his obstinacy sufficiently to retract them in print. One must never have fixed prejudices where music is concerned; no, not even when one is a great critic!"

I remarked that we still had a few elderly examples of the sort here in London; but as to the others, if they could not change their attitude it was from sheer conviction that it would be equivalent to high treason to do so.

"Then they are just as bad as Hanslick," replied Richter. "To me it is unbelievable (*unglaublich*) that intelligent musicians should fail, much less refuse, to recognize how beautiful, how almost supernaturally

beautiful, are these later works of Wagner. Of course, you have got to know them and know them *durch und durch* before you can perceive all the beauties that lie hidden in them. But whereabouts is the 'ugliness' that one hears of? I cannot find it. Besides, what is 'ugliness'? Do you say that Beethoven wrote 'ugly' music because he wrote discords like that strident one which announces the singer in the last movement of the Ninth Symphony?"

"Of course not," I said. "Only you must give us time. Remember, it is only five years since you first came and conducted at the Albert Hall, and until last week we really knew nothing of *Tristan* but the 'Vorspiel' and the 'Liebestod.'"

"I agree," said Richter. "Perhaps I am a little impatient with your old colleagues; besides, the audiences here are wonderful. So is my London orchestra—*ausgezeichnet!* And have you not got a splendid tenor, Edward Lloyd, who sings the 'Preislied' better than anyone I know? Well, directly we finish at Drury Lane I go off to Bayreuth to hear the first performance of *Parsifal*. No, I don't conduct that; Hermann Levi is doing it. That is a great work if you like, and perhaps next season London shall hear the 'Vorspiel.'"

When they had left, it occurred to me that Franke had barely spoken a word during the whole visit. He was never very talkative, but, in the presence of Richter or Wilhelmj, he was apparently content to sit open-mouthed and say nothing. Yet he was a close observer. I was standing with him once at the window of his room in Bentinck Street when Sir Julius Benedict went shuffling past on the opposite side, with bowed shoulders and short steps. "Look on that picture," said Franke, "and compare it with your old singing master, so upright and

quick when he walks along the street. Yet there cannot be a great difference between their ages?" I told him that Julius Benedict was exactly four months older than Manuel Garcia. "Quite so," added Franke, "and Garcia looks as though he would live to be a hundred." Which, as we know, he did.

But poor Franke himself never lived to see the outcome of all the useful work he had done in the background. He witnessed only the early growth of Richter's immense popularity, the effect that his method of dealing with the orchestra was having upon the rising generation of British conductors and composers, but very little of the procession of eminent German conductors whom Richter's triumphs attracted here in his wake—Levi, Mottl, Seidl, Strauss, Weingartner, Mahler, Nikisch, and the rest. Franke saw only the start of this invasion. He died, somewhere in the middle 'eighties, at a sanatorium in Germany.

No harm can come of copying a good example. The imitators, British and Continental, tried to obtain the effects that Richter got; to reinforce accent and intensify rhythm as he could; to bring out "inner parts" and push *motives* into prominence where he did. The new line of guest-conductors began to include not only Germans and Austro-Hungarians but Frenchmen; for Pasdeloup was followed in turn by Colonne and Lamoureux, who invariably —since travelling was cheap in those days—brought their own famous orchestras from Paris with them.

And so it went on, from the early 'eighties till the late 'nineties, this ever-growing "vogue of the orchestra"; perpetuating the foreign invasion in a new form; stimulating the tremendous appetite for Wagner alike in the

concert-room and the theatre; yet at the same time, where Richter was in control, ever fostering the love of the great masters.

In his treatment of new works he justified his fame as the "lightning score-reader," and displayed in them an extraordinary mastery of their minutest details. At those moments he was doubly worth watching; he turned over the pages, but seemed scarcely ever to look at them; obviously the score had been completely committed to memory. Stanford or Cowen or Parry—it was the same to him—he knew and unfolded their intimate thoughts as though they were his own. And Elgar! Who that was there when he first presented the "Enigma" Variations will ever forget that magnificent revelation? It was Richter, too, who conducted the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Birmingham Festival, in 1900.

His ideals, like his methods, never changed. He remained from first to last firm as a rock. He kept pace with the evolution that music was undergoing sufficiently to be its faithful interpreter when necessary; but he was too orthodox in spirit and tradition ever to penetrate gladly, or even willingly, into regions where sympathy and admiration ceased. Take him for all in all, Hans Richter was a rare and potent influence for good; and his activities bridged the most vital period of transition in the history of orchestral music in England.

Happily this record of our lasting debt to certain *fin-de-siècle* orchestral leaders is not to close without mention of one pioneer of British birth and training, who in his way did valuable spade-work. I am wondering as I write his name how many of my readers have ever heard of Thomas Henry Weist-Hill. Those who have done so

probably know that he was the prime mover in the founding of the Guildhall School of Music; and he was its first Principal.

Weist-Hill was not a great conductor. Measured beside such a giant as Richter he was what, judged by present-day standards, we should describe as an excellent *routinier*. His great merit lay in his capacity for clear, straightforward exposition of the classics and for attracting to the concert-room large crowds of untrained but willing listeners. Also, his programmes, chosen with these purposes in view, were generally models of what such programmes should be.

His opportunity did not come until rather late in life. Trained as a violinist at the Royal Academy, he was seventeen when elected "King's Scholar" in 1845, and later on, after a successful début, he toured extensively in Europe and the United States, where he was the first to perform the Mendelssohn violin concerto. In 1849 he settled down as an orchestral player under Costa at Her Majesty's. He was also appointed conductor of the ballet (a duty then looked upon as *infra dig.* by the illustrious *chef-d'orchestre*), and I once saw him officiate in that capacity at Drury Lane whilst Arditi sat below him and stared at the audience.* Not long after I had returned from Liverpool in 1874, the newly built Alexandra Palace at Muswell Hill—replacing the old one, destroyed by fire—was opened to the public, with Weist-Hill in a position analogous to that occupied by August Manns at the Crystal Palace.

He made an immediate hit with the eager multitudes that thronged to hear his excellent, low-priced concerts.

* The opera was Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, given during George Wood's season of 1870, with a cast that included Christine Nilsson, Ilma di Murska, Mongini, Gardoni, and Foli. The ballet, it will be remembered, is danced by the *ci-devant* wicked nuns, who rise from their tombs at the demon's bidding to try to fascinate Robert.

With an admirable orchestra, a capable choir, and a noble, up-to-date organ (played by the eccentric but talented Frederick Archer, one of the most brilliant organists of his day), the music that Weist-Hill gave at the Alexandra Palace was of such exceptional quality that for three seasons (1874-5-6) the average attendance reached high figures. Of oratorio he made a speciality, paying particular attention to Handel, whose neglected works, *Esther* and *Susannah*, he revived with the best available soloists. English opera was performed by visiting companies; while the instrumental programmes included such novelties as Bizet's first *Arlésienne* suite and overture to *Patrie*, and Massenet's "Scènes Pittoresques."

It should be noted that the lovely *Arlésienne* music —how unforgettable that first hearing !—was first played here a couple of years before *Carmen* was given in London, if not actually in the same month when Bizet received his death-blow at the hands of the Paris critics and the audience that hissed his glorious opera on its *première* at the Opéra-Comique.

Weist-Hill had an intense admiration for Bizet, and was very sore about the treatment of *Carmen*, which he wanted to produce forthwith at the Alexandra Palace. Unluckily his activities there lasted all too brief a period, but his love for the modern French school never diminished. At the orchestral concerts which he conducted for Mme. Viard-Louis at St. James's Hall in 1878-79 he not only directed the first performance in England of Saint-Saëns's "Dance Macabre" suite, but introduced a newcomer in the person of Jules Massenet, who conducted his own orchestral suite, "Shakespeare."

When the Alexandra Palace failed as a business speculation Weist-Hill was only fifty; and he used to say that

he felt his life-work was not nearly ended. As a matter of fact, it was to go on for another fourteen years, but in a totally different sphere. There was an idea which he had been pondering for some time in consultation with a few musical friends in the City of London, all members of the Court of Common Council, headed by Deputy Bedford, Pearse Morrison, John Bath, and W. Harvey. That idea was the Guildhall School of Music.

The original proposal was to " provide efficient musical (*i.e.* orchestral) performances " with the pecuniary support of the Corporation. A Music Committee was formed, which handed over a disused warehouse in Aldermanbury for the purpose, and appointed Weist-Hill as conductor. I attended in 1880, as musical critic of the *Citizen*, the first concert given by the new orchestra under Weist-Hill in that warehouse. It proved so encouraging that the Corporation forthwith resolved to extend the experiment and found a teaching institution akin to the new City of London School.

A large staff of professors of various grades gladly availed themselves of the chance to put in a solid day's work of short lessons on terms which made it possible to charge the pupils very low fees. This was Weist-Hill's idea, and it was the first time it had ever been tested in this country. Within a short time the number of students had far outgrown the capacity of the Aldermanbury warehouse. The building on the Victoria Embankment had to be erected. It was opened in 1887, and when the pupils numbered nearly three thousand the school was again enlarged, and a theatre built, while the staff rose to a hundred and thirty professors. (I taught there myself from 1888 till 1901.)

This unprecedented success was due in no small

measure to the personal popularity and administrative ability of Thomas Henry Weist-Hill, a man whom to know was to respect and love. He was succeeded (on his death in December, 1891) by Sir Joseph Barnby, who was in turn followed by Dr. W. H. Cummings and by Sir Landon Ronald.

That the understanding, appreciation, and support of good music would be greatly increased by opportunities for sound, inexpensive training was what Weist-Hill rightly foresaw; and so far he accomplished a useful purpose. I have reason, however, to question whether one important branch has benefited by this system of shorter and fewer lessons, of premature preliminary trials at school concerts, of still more premature appearances in public. It is a system that has been widely copied; and to it, I fear, must be attributed no small measure of the deterioration in the art of singing that has become so conspicuous in recent years.

## CHAPTER XI

### CRITICS, STAGE CELEBRITIES, AND SAVOYARDS

On the Staff of the *Sunday Times*—American Theatrical Invasions—Edwin Booth, Ada Rehan and Mary Anderson—The Royal Photographer and Disraeli—Some Celebrities Interviewed—Charles Warner's Accident—Sir Charles Wyndham: A Swiss Trip and a Letter—The Story of the Savoy Operas—How Richard D'Oyly Carte started the Enterprise—The Gilbert and Sullivan Partnership—A New School in Evolution—English Grand Opera Attempted—Sir Arthur Sullivan: His Personality and Some Letters.

WHEN I was appointed musical critic of the *Sunday Times* in October, 1881, that sedate old weekly was in rather low water. It was no longer in such demand as in the days when Mr. J. M. Levy, the founder of the *Daily Telegraph*, had been its enterprising proprietor. Neither was it the flourishing, brightly edited journal, with plentiful advertisements and lively headlines, that it is now. During the twenty years that I was on the staff it changed hands no fewer than five times; and between 1882 and 1885 I wrote both the dramatic and the musical criticisms.

No, not quite all the dramatic. One or two theatres were covered every week by the editor, Colonel George FitzGeorge, youngest son of the Duke of Cambridge, whose family were for some time the owners of the paper. Still, I found it very hard work, and the clashing fixtures were often difficult to fit in, even with the Colonel's help. I loved the theatre well enough to wish to keep in touch with it, whilst, on the other hand, I also felt that my position as a musical critic was now established and must be main-

tained at whatever personal cost. Well, I was still in my "twenties" and I could stand the strain.

Later on, when I added teaching to the work of musical criticism, I was glad to avail myself of the assistance of certain youthful and rising journalists who, for their part, were not sorry to gain experience under friendly guidance. Among those who "deputized" for me on the *Sunday Times* were several writers who subsequently earned high reputations in journalism—as, for example, the late Austin Brereton and Morgan Kingston; the still-living Malcolm Salaman, who became the regular dramatic (and art) critic of the *S.T.;* E. A. Baughan (then chiefly "musical"), Gilbert Webb, and Alfred Kalisch. Much water has since passed under the bridges; but I fancy these old friends and colleagues will not have forgotten the brief but pleasant associations to which I refer.

I found no difficulty, as the years went on, in adding other good papers to my "quiver," such as the *Illustrated London News*, the *Lady's Pictorial*, and the London musical correspondence of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Scotsman*. For these great provincial dailies I wrote regular "overnight" notices for several years, and, I may add, my dramatic colleague, the late William Archer, was doing likewise in company with me at the *Guardian* office two or three times a week.

The only real strain involved in my performance of these multiple duties lay in the necessity for writing as many as five notices of the same event; two notices of the opera having always to be finished before midnight. Archer was not so hard pressed, and yet he used to grumble that it was "trying work." He preferred having time to polish his sentences and convert newspaper criticism into elegant dramatic essays, such as he was then writing for the *World*.

He was also busy translating Ibsen's plays and introducing them to London theatre-goers.

Our dramatic world during this brief period was gently stirred at various intervals by what we were wont to term an American invasion. Well-known actors and actresses, even whole theatrical troupes, would arrive from the " other side " and appear at leading London theatres for weeks at a stretch. Of course they were not all upon the same exalted artistic level as that admirable tragedian, Edwin Booth, for whom playgoers formed a genuine affection during his notable visit in 1880-81. After an unfortunate start at the Princess's he appeared at other theatres, and then the brilliancy of his genius stood forth in its full light. A striking embodiment was his Richelieu, alive with colour and contrast, with delicate subtleties of tone and feeling, with irony and biting satire that cut like a sharp-edged knife.

I also saw Edwin Booth in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, and *The Fool's Revenge;* but beyond question Richelieu was his best part. (At the Players' Club, in New York, there is a fine picture of him seated in his cardinal's robes.) His voice was powerful yet sweet, and capable of remarkable modulations. Strange was the contrast when he appeared for seven weeks in *Othello*, playing one week the Moor to Irving's Iago, and the next week Iago to Irving's Othello. The former distribution exhibited each actor at his finest, whereas Irving could never succeed in making the dusky hero an impressive figure. Each provided a superb foil to the other and so gave London one of the greatest intellectual treats that the Shakespearean drama has ever yielded.

Two Americans—the tragedian, John McCullough, and

the comedian, William J. Florence—were visiting England at about the same time. McCullough was undeniably "stagey" and even inclined to rant; yet we were amused by his production of *Virginius*. It afforded several hearty laughs at the expense of Augustus Harris—then still a youthful and "naughty" actor—who floated about the stage in a light blue toga, literally waltzing through his part. On the other hand, Florence was quite an original and amusing comedian, and nearly as funny as his better-known countryman, John S. Clarke, whose vivid impersonations of Dr. Pangloss and Major Wellington de Boots kept the town for years in fits of laughter.

A new and strange vista of feminine dramatic charm was opened up for us a little later when Ada Rehan first came over with Augustin Daly's company. Originality in the case of this exquisite actress was combined with so much fascination of personality and manner, so much individuality of humour and breadth of expression, that one welcomed in her the apparition of an entirely new and entrancing type. Her swift yet graceful movements could only be compared to the quick and impetuous *élan* of a bird. Her voice was unlike any that I ever heard from other mortal throat; she seemed to blow her words from her lips in a semi-whisper that was nevertheless emotional tone, and it floated over the footlights to fill the whole theatre with its music. Ada Rehan as Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* remains an exquisite and fragrant memory.

Yet another precious gift from America—one all too brief and transient in her "traffic of the stage"—was the bewitching and talented Mary Anderson. It is difficult to realize that over three decades have elapsed since this

artist retired from the stage to become Mrs. de Navarro, and took up her residence in the quaint old village of Broadway, where she still resides. Her début at the Lyceum excited unusual curiosity, as much, perhaps, on account of her histrionic reputation as her extraordinary beauty, which some people thought to excel that of such British miracles of loveliness as the Countess of Dudley, Lady Lonsdale, and Mrs. Langtry. But her refined acting, dignified bearing, mellow voice made a delightful impression. From her first appearance as Parthenia, in the old-fashioned romantic play of *Ingomar* (with Jack Barnes in the title-part), she was a decided success.

Not many weeks afterwards she was seen at the Lyceum with poor William Terriss in *Romeo and Juliet*, and therein set the seal upon her London reputation as a serious actress. As an exposition of tragic power, her delineation suffered through comparison with fresh memories of the great English Juliet, Adelaide Neilson; but, in spite of that, it won frank, sincere admiration. Anyhow, two such handsome lovers as Mary Anderson and William Terriss had probably never been seen together upon the boards. I may add that Miss Anderson found an ardent supporter and friend in Sir (then Mr.) W. S. Gilbert, in whose *Pygmalion and Galatea* she depicted the fair statue-heroine with such delightful naïveté, charm, and winsome grace that he wrote expressly for her his clever, if somewhat artificial piece, *Comedy and Tragedy*.

I was the first European journalist to whom Mary Anderson granted an interview. But if unwilling to be interviewed, she was not unwilling to be photographed. The late Mr. William Downey (the Royal photographer) told me in 1885 that she had sat for him on twelve occasions

*Photo: W. and D. Downey.*

MARY ANDERSON AND MRS. STIRLING

and that he possessed two hundred negatives of her—all more or less fascinating pictures. For selling purposes they were, he declared, the most popular in Europe, though in the United Kingdom Mrs. Langtry was a powerful rival. The "Jersey Lily," as the latter was called, sat for Mr. Downey innumerable times, and he had four hundred negatives of her. Down to that time, in fact, he had sold over a quarter of a million photographs of Mrs. Langtry; but during the succeeding years, whilst she was a conspicuous figure on the stage, the total probably rose to nearer a million copies. Which reminds me of another story that Mr. Downey told me. It concerned "Dizzy."

Disraeli had a very strong objection to being photographed. For years Mr. Downey had endeavoured to persuade him to come to Ebury Street to be "taken." Nothing could alter his decision. In the early autumn of 1868, whilst Disraeli was staying at Balmoral as Minister in attendance, Mr. Downey came from London to execute various studies of personages and places for Queen Victoria; and one day, when thus occupied in the park, he found himself being watched by no less a person than the Prime Minister. The latter was wearing a quaint mixed costume of the period, including a pair of very light blue trousers and a light blue tie. Notwithstanding this, the photographer at last succeeded in persuading him to stand for a couple of negatives dressed just as he was.

On the following morning, however, a knock came at the studio door and in walked Disraeli, wearing dark trousers and a handsome black velvet jacket. "Good day, Mr. Downey," said he, "I want you to take me again. I am rather doubtful about those light blue trousers, and I would like you to try me in this jacket."

Among the various celebrities whom I interviewed

for the *Sunday Times* were William Holland, who, as a popular entertainment provider, rivalled Mr. Whiteley in a more "universal" sphere; Arthur Chappell, already referred to; Charles Warner and Charles Wyndham, the actors; H. B. Farnie, the librettist, who worked hard to secure British copyright in America and elsewhere; Verbeck, the famous conjuror, whom the Prince of Wales was fond of having at Marlborough House to entertain his guests; Richard D'Oyly Carte, the manager of the Savoy Theatre; and Joseph Joachim.

Charles Warner was a spirited and imaginative actor. It was his ambition to emulate the triumphs of Henry Irving and shine in the "legitimate" or Shakespearean line of characters as well as the romantic. His forte lay, however, in the latter, and after the phenomenal piece of vivid melodramatic acting which he gave as Coupeau, the drunken hero of *L'Assommoir* (adapted from Zola's novel), the public clamoured for that and nothing else. As brother members of the Green Room Club, Charles Warner and I met frequently, and we became great friends. He never forgot my rushing off to the Charing Cross Hospital to fetch a doctor when he was hurt in the last act of a new play called *Michael Strogoff*, produced at the Adelphi Theatre.

In the course of a struggle with the villain he received a deep cut along the forefinger of the right hand, accidentally inflicted by his boon companion James Fernandez (another fine actor), who had no notion that the blade of the knife was sharp. Although the wound was promptly dressed (Warner had fainted and Fernandez, poor fellow, was weeping !) it became severely inflamed, and for many days the actor lost the use of his hand. In fact, he narrowly escaped losing his finger.

My memories of Sir Charles Wyndham include a summer holiday in the Engadine in 1895, during the early part of which I joined him at Pontresina and Maloja. His Swiss trips were generally remarkable for some mountain accident that was reported in the London newspapers as being "nearly fatal," but not quite. As a matter of fact, Wyndham did not relish the fatigue of hard climbing, so on my arrival at Pontresina I was greatly surprised to learn that he had gone up the Piz Languard under the guidance of his friend Sir H. Seymour King, the banker (then President of the Alpine Club), and the late Lady King. Happily he returned to the hotel none the worse for his "adventure," having, indeed, negotiated all but the final ascent on the back of a strong mule; while Miss Mary Moore (the present Lady Wyndham) had wisely allowed herself to be conveyed to the summit on a *chaise-à-porteurs*. What is more, in honour of the event the popular actor gave us a delightful picnic in a neighbouring valley.

But if not a keen Alpine climber, Charles Wyndham was a charming companion amid romantic surroundings. His poetic nature enabled him to extract the fullest enjoyment from the lovely Swiss scenery, and there dwells in my mind a wonderful walk that we had together over the Bernina Pass from Pontresina to the Poschiavo lake and back, with the youthful Bronson Albery for our companion. We stayed the night at Poschiavo, and after dinner went for a stroll along the road which skirts the lake. A full moon happened to light up the grand picture with an effulgence that brought every peak into clear relief. It moved Wyndham to an intensity of emotion that I had never observed in him off the stage. Among many other things, he said to me :

"Klein, you and I will never forget this beautiful night!" And it was true. Whenever we met, for over twenty years afterwards, he always asked me, "Do you remember that heavenly night at Poschiavo?"

During our stay at the Maloja Hotel I was induced to take part in a baseball match organized by (Sir) A. Conan Doyle, at which Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft with the Wyndhams and Mary Moore were among the spectators. Cricket was then my game, and American baseball was new to me. But I rather fancy our side won.

In the following October Charles Wyndham was back at work, and I quote below portions of a letter which he wrote in reply to a note from me, informing him that a certain expected German *Sängerin* of (morganatic) distinction was not coming to London:

Criterion Theatre, Piccadilly, W.
*Oct.* 15, '95.

My dear Klein,—Forgive my tardy reply. After a ten weeks' holiday—the longest I've ever had—there are so many threads to pick up and gather together that I have been living with my nose to the grindstone. How different it was during the *dolce far niente* days of St. Moritz! They have quite unfitted me for work.

The scent of the battle, however, will, I suppose, make the old war-horse sniff again, and you have played the long roll for me and given the warning cry of danger. Is it absolutely settled about that German Grand Duchess? What a pity! We will talk the matter over when I see you. . . .

I do not know whether the Kings have returned. They went to Venice a few days after we left St. Moritz—possibly they will be back by next week.—Yours sincerely,

Charles Wyndham.

I became acquainted with Richard D'Oyly Carte in 1877, during my connexion with the *Operatic and Dramatic*

*Album*. To that circumstance I owe the happy recollection of being present at the production of *The Sorcerer* at the Opera Comique Theatre (November 18th, 1877), the first of the long succession of world-renowned comic operas created by the twin geniuses of William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. It was subsequently my unique privilege —unique, I believe, for a working journalist still in the flesh—to attend and criticize every first performance of the now-historic series from 1878 down to 1896.

So, when I went in 1885 to interview Mr. D'Oyly Carte at the Savoy Theatre on behalf of the *Sunday Times*, I had known him some eight years, and was in a position to appreciate from actual observation the valuable work he had accomplished in—what shall I say?—not "exploiting" but in consolidating, assimilating, and reinforcing the united labours of his gifted collaborators.

For they were, these three men, a truly interdependent trio. The work of each was essential to the other. If it was Gilbert and Sullivan who supplied the incomparable "bricks and mortar," the substance and form of the amazing structure, then it was D'Oyly Carte who furnished the finished product with living shape and colour, who set it before the world with taste and elegance to the greatest benefit of all concerned. It is easy enough to be wise after the event, but, truth to tell, there was no certainty in view when D'Oyly Carte formed his "Comedy Opera Company" and took the underground fire-trap known as the Opera Comique Theatre (between old Holywell Street and the Strand, opposite St. Mary's Church) for the purpose of running a new comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan. Indeed, I knew intimately three good fellows with money in the scheme; and though hopeful, they were by no means sanguine as to its success. They only knew that they

had faith in D'Oyly's judgment, and that the book and score of *The Sorcerer* were thought to be a distinct advance upon *Cox and Box*, if not fully equal to *Trial by Jury*.

But they asked another question: Would George Grossmith and Rutland Barrington be as successful on the stage as they were *quâ* social entertainers? The answer to that, and indeed to all the rest of the sceptical queries, came clear and strong in the series of tremendous ovations that marked the opening performance. The scene at the end, when first the author and composer, then the manager by himself, came in front of the curtain, was a demonstration to be remembered. I had seldom witnessed anything to equal it; and no one witnessing it then could possibly have dreamt that there was to be a repetition of the same tableau, with the same enthusiasm more or less, every year for twenty years to come.

But *H.M.S. Pinafore* in the following May was another "eye-opener." It inaugurated a furore that involved not only England but the whole of the United States, where the opera was forthwith shamelessly pirated and appropriated without payment of a cent of royalty. Two things resulted. D'Oyly Carte started to build the Savoy Theatre, and the next opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*, was mounted in America (in 1879, by the three Savoyards in person) prior to its performance here, the acting copyright being thus rendered secure for both countries. The same trouble had to be met in the case of every opera until the copyright law was altered, and the story of the devices by which Yankee ingenuity was circumvented on the production of *The Mikado* constituted a perfect romance. In Richard D'Oyly Carte the would-be pirates met their match.

As soon as the new theatre was ready, in 1882, it was opened with *Patience*, which had been running for some time at the Opera Comique and was the last of the series to be produced there. Then, almost in successive years, came *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida*, and *The Mikado*. It was in the spring of the year in which the glorious little Japanese opera was brought out (in 1885) that I sought the materials for an "interview" from Mr. D'Oyly Carte. With his habitual diffidence regarding anything which he thought might be looked upon as in the nature of a puff or self-advertisement, he begged at first to be excused, but, after some persuasion, ultimately gave way and provided the necessary information.

This he sent with the following letter, which throws an interesting side-light upon the thoughtful and modest nature of the busy manager:

Savoy Theatre, Strand.
12.0 Midnight, *April 23rd*, 1885.

Dear Mr. Klein,—I have been in great trouble about the writing out the material for your article. My regular staff have been so frightfully busy that I have had to employ an outside shorthand-writer, not one of my own people. I did not know how *very* bad his writing was (which it is, although he is a very painstaking youth), and I have to alter and hack about and rewrite parts.

I hope you will be able to make it out. I would have had it rewritten, but there is no time. I have put down the points in the form of statements to you as being most convenient; but please only consider these as the materials on which to found an article, as the form is much too bald.

In the form put they read to me (on going over them) somewhat too self-assertive, so will you please alter them as desirable and if possible let them read a little more modestly? I should like much to see a proof and would keep any appointment to-morrow evening for that purpose.—I am, yours faithfully, R. D'Oyly Carte.

To the present generation, it is, I think, a matter for congratulation that the mantle of the father should have fallen upon a son who resembles him in many respects. Rupert D'Oyly Carte has carried on the Savoy traditions with conspicuous care and accuracy. He has spared nothing to preserve them in their integrity, whether as to *mise en scène*, stage business, or musical interpretation. Not his the fault if the twentieth century has not granted him singers or actors equal to that wonderful procession of inimitable artists who embodied each new set of characters as they emerged from the chrysalis state.

For they learned from the author to speak with the right inflection, with the suitable accompanying gesture, and with the faultless enunciation of every word or line; and from the composer to acquire the correct tone, the infallible rhythm, the best way to sing every note, and how to pronounce every syllable in just proportion, so that "all the world might hear" and, hearing, enjoy. One artist alone—and he not really a product of the new culture—has preserved intact the unique efficiency and singular qualities that distinguished the old Savoy school. That artist is Mr. H. A. Lytton.

Gilbert and Sullivan were great teachers as well as great inventors. Both had already learned their experience by laborious study and legitimate practice carried on in the recognized grooves and channels of their respective arts. When they first joined hands it was not to create fresh methods, but to adapt their knowledge and gifts to the logical fulfilment of a single artistic purpose. Into this mutual work of evolution they infused a constant, inexhaustible succession of novel and individual ideas, with wit, humour, and charm underlying them all.

Then arose the question of interpretation—of a technical rendering that should truthfully reflect these ideas. The comedy must be unforced, the utterance of the Gilbertian lines clean, intelligible; conveying their exact meaning, yet entirely without consciousness of their humour. The singing had to be pure, neat, faultlessly in tune, and informed with the right expression. Artists capable of all this were not to be found ready-made. And if they had to be trained, the author and the composer alone were capable of giving them the requisite instruction.

If *Trial by Jury* gave an inkling as to the possibilities of the new combination, *The Sorcerer* made manifest what skill and dexterity could do with clever people who were not stars; with actors who were not too " distinguished " to be moulded into their parts or to yield to the fancies of tutors who knew exactly what they wanted, odd and unusual as these fancies might seem to them. Hence, whilst smiling at the " topsy-turvydom " and laughing over the quips or the witticisms, we secretly marvelled at the naturalness and ease with which these quaint things were said and done.

For until then no living soul had seen upon the stage such weird, eccentric, yet intensely human beings, or listened to such voiceless, yet not unvocal singers, as the " pale young curate " of Rutland Barrington or the " dealer in magic and spells " depicted by George Grossmith. Their strangeness was disconcerting but irresistible; they conjured into existence a hitherto unknown comic world of sheer delight. The novel fascination and attractiveness of what they said and sang, whether in solo, ensemble, or chorus, fell upon the ear with a tickling lilt or a soothing balm that was irresistible. Their dances, like " their exits

and their entrances," were models of eloquent fantastic movement.

The new Savoy school of English comic opera, whilst taking shape, engendered its own methods and crystallized its own peculiar characteristics. Look into every book and score that came after *The Sorcerer* and you will perceive in them all, modified and developed with infinite variety and miraculous fertility of resource, the same types of character, the same root-ideas, the same basic musical forms, the same mastery of technical treatment beneath the same plain, unassuming exterior.

Never was there a more striking example of the " eternal fitness of things " than this association of two men's brains and talent. It mattered not exactly how they worked, each " number " would always come out right. A suggestion or even a mere hint on the part of either sufficed. So well did they understand each other that the perfect result ensued. Gilbert may not have been musical, but he knew the supreme ability of the musician with whom he was linked, and how to provide him with good all-round working material. A score without its unaccompanied madrigal would have been as unthinkable to him as to Sullivan himself.

Yet as time went on, and notably after the extraordinary success of *The Mikado*, a subtle change began to manifest itself in the nature of Sullivan's musical treatment. It became more elaborate. The spirit of parody was no longer uppermost, as it had been, for instance, in the Italian ensemble of *Trial by Jury* (a caricature of the second finale in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*) or in the Handelian *fugato* that heralds the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, which opera many people consider, as a whole, the most perfect specimen of the entire series.

The change I speak of was really coeval with the development of Sullivan's later manner, as exemplified in his cantata, *The Golden Legend*, and his incidental music to *Macbeth*. It first revealed itself at the Savoy in 1888 in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. He told me that he had taken more pains over that score than any of the earlier ones; and it was also the one that he himself liked best. In that opinion I fully coincided, both at the time and after *The Gondoliers* had arrived, a year later, to enchant us with its delicious tunes and intoxicating dance rhythms.

But each of these scores, from the earliest to the latest, was a veritable gem in its way. The advance, after all, lay mainly in the increasing number of the facets, each scintillating with a greater brilliancy due to the ever-growing skill of the master hand. Who shall say wherein resided the chief glory? Some saw it in the concerted vocal part-writing, especially those eagerly awaited unaccompanied bits, with their naïve semi-ecclesiastical cadences, their welcome echoes of a then half-forgotten Elizabethan idiom, the secret of the halcyon days of English music to which Arthur Sullivan then almost alone possessed the key. Others found it in the glorious little diatonic melodies—those simple, undying tunes that the "butcher's boy" could whistle; endless in their variety, often alike as peas in a pod, yet dissimilar as the lines of long grass on the hillside.

For others the chief joy lay in the tripping duets and trios, the sentimental solos, the merry, graceful choruses, the solid, massively-built finales. Whilst a few again found it in the delicate instrumentation, patterned originally upon masterpieces of Schubert and Mendelssohn, but gradually enriched beyond recognition by the inimitable touches of character that the world began to call "Sullivan-

esque." A few of us could make no choice from among all these treasures, but found an equal delight in them all.

Fame and fortune, however, often bring with them fresh ambitions. By the time the 'nineties were approaching, the "Trio of Savoyards" had become rich men, and two at least of them began to dream of yet greater achievements. For Sir William Gilbert the idea of what the French were the first to call *grand opéra* held no particular attraction; he wisely and frankly declared it to be out of his line. But Richard D'Oyly Carte had noted the recent death of Carl Rosa and the consequent menace to the fabric of native opera "on the grand scale."

Like a brave, well-intentioned champion, he made a bold stroke, asked Sullivan to write *Ivanhoe*, and built the "Royal English Opera" (now the Palace Theatre) to perform it in. The opera, produced on January 31st, 1891, ran for 155 nights; but the triumph of that record did not suffice to ensure the triumph of the enterprise. One of the most beautiful and luxurious theatres ever erected in London was, in less than a year, lost to serious British opera.*

But if D'Oyly Carte's splendid idea failed, it did not do so ingloriously; and, in the ten years of life that yet remained to him, he added numerous successes to his Savoy list, thanks to the faithful co-operation of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who did not desert the ship even when Sir William Gilbert temporarily withdrew. In 1900, however, the chain was snapped through the death of Sullivan, wherewith "the most famous, the most interesting, the most

* A more complete story of this gallant undertaking is narrated in my "Thirty Years," pp. 332—338.

successful collaboration in the whole history of the theatre came to an end."* Gilbert died under tragic circumstances in 1911. Neither he nor Sullivan left so much money as D'Oyly Carte, whose estate was reported to be of the gross value of nearly a quarter of a million; but, on the other hand, the annual income from the royalties and performing rights still represents a fortune.

Once the Gilbert and Sullivan operas had disappeared from central London, all sorts of doleful predictions were uttered. The general idea appeared to be that these simple entertainments belonged to the past and would never again attract a cultured metropolitan audience. I took a different view, and as long ago as June, 1918, I wrote in the *Saturday Review*, pointing out the advisability of putting the question to the test :

> The happy stroke of fortune that brought Gilbert and Sullivan into collaboration, with Richard D'Oyly Carte for entrepreneur, was in the nature of a true blessing. The long series of beautiful productions at the Savoy in the 'eighties and 'nineties represent the ideal development, the golden period, of the only sort of genuine comic opera that we can legitimately call our own. What else in this category have we that we can point to with pride as purely English in conception, spirit, verbal and musical humour and treatment ? . . .
>
> How comes it that these exquisite creations should for so many years have been relegated to the provincial and the suburban theatres ? London proper, alas ! knows them no more ; yet surely not because it has tired of them. The youthful music-lovers of to-day are only acquainted with their Savoy operas as strummed by a restaurant orchestra or a band in the Park, or (save the mark !) a gramophone. But they love the tunes, and no one can doubt

* "W. S. Gilbert, His Life and Letters," by Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey. London : Methuen and Co., 1924.

for a moment that they would crowd to a worthy and properly managed revival of all the best of the series at a central metropolitan theatre.

The response to this appeal did not come until two or three years later, but when it did come the public verdict was unmistakable. Obviously the new generation agreed with its predecessor. The fear lest the highbrows of to-day should turn up their noses at the immortal Savoyards had been purely imaginary. The audiences that have crowded to see the creditable revivals at the Princes Theatre were not less enthusiastic than their forbears. If I may venture to prophesy, I give it as my opinion that the Savoy operas will never grow stale, never lose their piquant flavour or their unique charm. Like the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Mozart, they are for all time, since they possess the same qualities of eternal freshness and youth.

Arthur Sullivan was one of the most lovable men I have ever met; also one of the most diplomatic and discreet. He had a warm, affectionate nature, and to me he proved himself a sincere and grateful friend. Intimacy between us was a growth of years, and it developed only after confidence had been firmly established. For a spoilt child of Royalty and *la haute société* he was remarkably modest, and, for one who suffered so long from a trying malady, his patience and his capacity for composing beautiful music under physical difficulties was most extraordinary. I will close this chapter with a few letters or quotations from his letters to me, hitherto unpublished.

This, when I asked him to give me for publication some particulars about *Ivanhoe:*

1, Queen's Mansions, Victoria Street, S.W.
*19th Dec.*, 1890.

My dear Klein,—You know that I am always pleased to do what I can to oblige you. But I have many good friends in the Press, and I should not like to shew an invidious distinction; so that I must ask you to wait for a few days, and, I think, then I shall be able to give you some interesting details about my new opera.—Yours very truly,

Arthur Sullivan.

And this, after the details which he gave me had appeared in print:

11 *Jan.*, 1891.

Dear Klein,—I have only a minute free to-day to say that if you always use information confided to you with as much discretion, good taste, and gracefulness as you shew in to-day's paper, you need never fear any "mystery" or "secrecy" in musical affairs that I may be concerned in. It is excellent.—Yours sincerely,

Arthur Sullivan.

This, just after the birth of my elder son, when I was wanting to get away from town:

2 *Sept.*, 1892.

Dear Klein,—My heartiest congratulations and best wishes. May the boy become a great man, *doch immer ein wenig Klein!*

We are struggling for the 17th,* but between you and me I don't think we can possibly get it out on that date. Carte thinks we can, but Harris (Charles) and I *know* we can't. You may therefore reckon on the 24th, and take your holiday in peace.—Yours sincerely,

Arthur Sullivan.

During the winter of 1896-7 Sir Arthur went to the Riviera to write his music for the ballet, *Victoria*, which was to be mounted at the Alhambra in the following spring. He was very anxious that it should be a success, and his

* For the production of *Haddon Hall*, composed to a libretto by Sydney Grundy. It was not produced until September 24th.

wish was abundantly realized. He wrote (on St. Valentine's Day):

> I am working very hard indeed at the ballet, and I think it is tuneful and hope it will be attractive. I have scored about 250 pages, and have about 150 more to do. It will have a splendid *mise en scène*, and the end is rather thrilling. I hope to be in London the middle of next month to look after the final rehearsals, then we can talk more on this and other subjects.

I wonder why *Victoria* has never been revived? As an historical show, it would always possess a certain interest, and the music is charming — pure Sullivan.

Sir Arthur Sullivan lies buried under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and it was my high privilege to have charge—in conjunction with the late Alfred Littleton—of the arrangements for the funeral service on the occasion of his interment there on November 27th, 1900. Attended by a vast concourse of people, the ceremony had many solemn moments; but by far the most touching of all was when the members of the Savoy Chorus, under the leadership of their able conductor, the late François Cellier, sang the lovely Funeral Anthem, "Brother, thou art gone before us," from the master's setting of *The Martyr of Antioch*. The inspired melody of the refrain, "Where the wicked cease from troubling," brought tears to every eye.

I wish I had known Sir William Gilbert equally well. He had not the same *suaviter in modo;* but I was on sufficiently friendly terms with him to feel assured that his reputation and something of his manner as a martinet belied his real disposition. It is also certain that the spirit of discipline which he brought to the Savoy Theatre aided not a little to create and preserve the traditions which

another generation of artists and choristers is striving to keep alive to-day. Anyhow, he was a born humorist, and his biographers are not far wrong when they assert that "Charles Dickens and William Schwenk Gilbert were the two greatest English humorous writers of the Victorian era."

# CHAPTER XII

## OPERA UNDER AUGUSTUS HARRIS—AND AFTER

The Régime of Augustus the Younger—The "Royal Italian Opera" Resuscitated—A Supper at the Green Room Club—Harris's Operatic Aspirations and Methods—His Advisers—Wagner in Italian: An Incident at Rehearsal—Local Colour in Opera—Fancy Dress Balls Revived—Joseph Lyons Gets His Chance—"Gus" Entertains—Buys the *Sunday Times*—The Memorable Constellation of 1888—Great Revivals and a Final "Flare-Up"—The Genius of the Impresario—Harris's would-be Successors—The Grand Opera Syndicate—Mr. H. V. Higgins: the "Man Behind the Gun"—New York and London in Operatic Competition—Changing Conditions—Chaliapin's Reply —Exigent "Stars"—The Syndicate's Best Years—Sir Thomas Beecham's Brave Effort.

EARLIER in this book I drew a double line at what I consider was the close of a great operatic era. From 1885 until 1887—only two seasons, but it seemed an age in those days—we had a sort of interregnum. The lamp had apparently gone out. It flickered on for another couple of years at Covent Garden; but the *vieille garde* would have nothing to do with second-rate Italian opera as exploited by Mr. Gye's old *régisseur*, Signor Lago.

Then, after a memorable experimental season of a month at Drury Lane, was inaugurated the reign of Augustus Harris; and the flame burned brightly and steadily once more. It cost Harris £10,000 to pay for his "footing." In April, 1888, he opened Covent Garden, the ancestral home of the "Royal Italian Opera," with all the familiar brilliant adjuncts and accessories, and with the cream of London society present in force, headed by their illustrious

leaders the Prince and Princess of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra.

It marked, to all appearance, the beginning of a new era of prosperity, and, had Harris lived, it might have been a lasting one. Alas, the exuberant Augustus, best of good fellows, passed away suddenly in the summer of 1896, at the comparatively early age of forty-four. As I stood by his graveside at the Brompton Cemetery next to two distinguished men, Lord Brampton (Sir Henry Hawkins) and the first Lord Burnham (then Sir Edward Lawson), I remember this remark of the famous judge: "Poor Gus! I've been racking my brains, but for the life of me I cannot imagine who is going to take his place." No one has done so. Like his sometime partner, Carl Rosa, he had no successor.

I made the acquaintance of Augustus Harris in the autumn of 1879. I went to the Green Room Club one night in response to this note:

Princess's Theatre.

DEAR KLEIN,—Tom Thorne wishes me to ask you to sup with him at the "Green Room" on Wednesday next at 11.30. Drop me a line like a good boy.—Yours ever, CHARLES WARNER.

Arriving early, I sat down on a lounge beside a rather stout young man of about twenty-five, with a bright, sunny face, gleaming, prominent eyes, and a smile that was apparently ready at any moment to expand into a merry laugh. A brother member introduced him to me as the actor who had played the "boy" in James Albery's farce *Pink Dominoes*, at the Criterion Theatre, and as a son of Augustus Harris, the former stage manager at Covent Garden. We at once began talking about opera; nor did we leave the subject until Tom Thorne led the way to the supper table.

Briefly, Harris told me this: "I am tremendously fond of opera, and, though no musician, I know something about it. What my father didn't teach me about the staging of opera I have learnt in the provinces as Mapleson's assistant stage-manager. Who knows? One of these days I may be an impresario." Nine years later he realized his ambition when he took the place so long filled by Frederic Gye. Meanwhile he became lessee of Drury Lane, where he gave the Franke-Pollini season of German Opera in 1882 and the admirable Shakespearean productions of the Meiningen Company.

But of all this the youthful Gus had not the remotest premonition when we chatted together at Tom Thorne's supper. Among the guests were, I recollect, Charles Warner, David James, Charles Wyndham, and William Terriss; and a very merry party we made. I sat next to Harris, and the friendship we struck up that night lasted until his death.

There was a period—beginning perhaps with the year 1890, during which Sir Augustus Harris served as Sheriff of London—when all the operatic centres of Europe rang with the doughty deeds of this courageous impresario. Offers of service came to him from all the big cities; he had agents everywhere. This made him too prone to overburden his company with talent which he could not profitably utilize, besides purchasing performing rights of operas that he could not possibly produce. Occasionally, though, he had a singular *flair* for the right thing, as, for instance, when he gave Choudens, the Paris publisher, a large sum for the English rights of *Carmen*. They turned out extremely valuable; in fact they only lately expired on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Bizet. I was with Harris when he negotiated this deal with Choudens, and as we left

the shop he exclaimed : " There ! That is what I call a sound family investment."

He loved when planning his opera bill for the week to play the part of a Cæsar or Napoleon surrounded by his generals; first writing out, then tearing up, one draft programme after another with a loud guffaw and the remark (in French so that the foreigners might understand) " Eh bien, ça ne sera pas ça du tout "—or " No; that's nothing like it ! " And then the scheming would start afresh. He had excellent departmental chiefs, and with their aid he got through an extraordinary amount of work.

The man who helped him most in the early days was A. M. Broadley, well known as the writer of " Celebrities at Home " on the *World*, and as the barrister who defended the notorious Arabi Pasha. He was chiefly valuable to Harris, however, in social and masonic matters. He secured his election as Sheriff and as Grand Treasurer of the Freemasons, after helping him to found the Drury Lane Lodge.

As a kind of *fidus Achates*, I had accompanied Augustus Harris when he went to France and Spain to secure artists for his preliminary season, and among others I had recommended the engagement of the De Reszkes. He was full of ideas, but willing to discuss them before taking a decision. He was obliged to consider the whims and fancies of his subscribers with regard to the choice of operas and singers; and they were not always easy to please. They wanted nothing of native growth. For instance, they refused to hear more than one opera each from Goring Thomas and Villiers Stanford; and for a time they even fought shy of Isidore de Lara. They insisted on " polyglot " opera—French, Italian and German works sung in the original languages.

During Harris's earlier seasons at Covent Garden it was Jean de Reszke who held the "casting vote." He influenced Lady de Grey (the late Marchioness of Ripon), and her wishes generally embodied those of the subscribers whose support she had secured. The chief ambassador was her ladyship's brother-in-law, Mr. H. V. Higgins, a partner in a well-known firm of solicitors, and now for many years chairman of the Grand Opera Syndicate. At first Mr. Higgins brought to his task only the taste of a fastidious dilettante, gained chiefly in triangular trips between London, Paris, and Brussels. In course of time, however, he acquired considerable operatic *savoir faire*, perhaps of an administrative and æsthetic rather than a genuinely musical order; anyhow, he was able to convey valuable suggestions to Harris in anticipation of the subscribers' wishes. These, however, did not prevent Augustus from indulging his own personal inclinations when he chose.

Harris adored Wagner; and so did his public, even more than his aristocratic *abonnés*. In 1889 the latter were not quite ready for opera in German—nor was Jean de Reszke. But the irresistible tenor was quite determined to sing *Die Meistersinger* in Italian (after I had persuaded him to hear it for himself at Bayreuth), with his friend Lassalle as Hans Sachs and Luigi Mancinelli as conductor. There was some opposition, but it quickly subsided. A special translation was made, and Harris sent me one of the theatre scores (I have it still) with Mazzucato's Italian text written in in red ink. At the rehearsals he thoroughly enjoyed himself, not interfering much, except in the last act, where he had hard work with the noisy Italian choristers on the banks of the Pegnitz.

One morning Harris rushed on to the stage during the entrance of the Tailors' Guild and asked them if they knew what word they were repeatedly shouting. They did not; but they thought it sounded something like "Beh." "It's nothing of the sort," said Harris. "I don't care how it is translated, but the word for you tailors to sing is the one that Wagner wrote, 'Meck, meck, *meck*.' Sing it with a nasal tone like this." And he bawled it out for them; whereupon they imitated him perfectly. It then sounded good enough for Bayreuth, yet he liked it so that he made them repeat their entrance twice over. Afterwards he came into the stalls and sat down beside me.

"I know," he said, "they got it right as soon as I showed them. But I am so fond of the blessed thing that I could have heard them do it twenty times."

He was as simple as a child in many respects, but he knew his business and could be obstinate enough once he had made up his mind. He would make long journeys to obtain the correct *couleur locale* for his new productions. For *Carmen* he returned from Seville with every detail complete, and when he mounted *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Mme. Calvé declared that the scene and the sunlight were absolutely Sicilian. The older popular operas were splendidly revived, always with wonderful casts—particularly in those of Meyerbeer, for which he had inherited the correct traditions from his father.

Each of the modern schools had its turn. No living composer would refuse the invitation to come over for a Covent Garden production of his work, given usually with a cast of his own choosing. Thus, Massenet was here for *La Navarraise* and *Werther*, Boïto for the revival of *Mefistofele*, Alfred Bruneau for *Le Rêve* and *L'Attaque du*

*Moulin*, Mascagni for *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *L'Amico Fritz*, Leoncavallo for *Pagliacci*, Humperdinck for *Hänsel und Gretel*, Puccini for *La Bohème*, *Manon Lescaut*, and *Tosca*.

To these representations a peculiar glamour attached. Each season, so long as Harris remained at the helm, was marked by features of peculiar interest, whether they took the form of Wagner revivals, State gala performances, or, as in 1895, the farewell operatic appearances of Adelina Patti. There was always something notable and of a high order to attract the more exigent and *blasé* opera-lovers. Hence was it that in the 'nineties one was inclined to believe that the "palmy days" had returned, never to depart again.

Another of Harris's "happy thoughts" was the revival of the *bal masqué* at the Opera House. It was a form of amusement that had not been in vogue here for many years, and the impresario knew so little about it that he felt obliged to go to Paris and Brussels to see for himself how these fêtes were organized. I went with him on these expeditions, and we noted what was to be imitated, what avoided. He had a dancing-floor constructed to cover the stalls and elevate it to the level of the stage, concealing the walls with scenic decorations and imparting a festive appearance to the whole theatre.

It was in connexion with the Covent Garden fancy-dress balls that the firm of Joseph Lyons & Co. first came into prominence. In fact, it was through Augustus Harris that the name became widely known; and, by a curious chance, I had something to do with his decision to give the wedding caterers a trial. He was considering the matter and putting questions to two members of the firm, when

I entered the office and shook hands with "Joe" Lyons, whom I knew well.

"So you know Mr. Lyons?" inquired Harris. "Well, what do you think of his *cuisine?* Is it good enough for the suppers at the balls? He declares he can do them as well as Gunter or Spiers and Pond, and at a lower figure."

"You need have no fear about the quality," I said. "I have sampled some of Mr. Lyons's wedding repasts, and they are first-rate. The only question is whether he can carry things out on such a big scale as this."

Joseph Lyons smiled quietly and remarked: "I don't think you need have any fear, Mr. Harris. Forgive the comparison, but just as you can manœuvre your army of 'supers' at the Lane, so can I manage my army of *chefs* and waiters; it is only a matter of numbers."

"Very well, then," said Harris, "we will consider it settled."

And settled it was. The suppers, served at small tables in the foyer and even in the private boxes, proved to everybody's liking, and quite as popular as the dancing. Therewith Joseph Lyons & Co. made their first hit as public caterers and laid the foundations of a success that has proved more enduring in its way than that of the operatic régime which furnished them with the initial opportunity.

The first Covent Garden "fancy-dress ball" was badly attended. Fancy dress was conspicuous by its absence. I recollect one young lady appearing early, attired as Eve, and being hurried to a private box whilst someone was sent to fetch a spare domino for her. But when, in subsequent seasons, Harris offered valuable prizes for the handsomest or most ingenious costumes, the balls soon became crowded and they quickly developed into an institution. They

helped to brighten London when it was still the dismal city of the late Victorian age, and what is more, they prepared the field for the unprecedented dancing revival and the huge costume balls of to-day.

Augustus Harris was by nature generous and hospitable, and he used to entertain lavishly at his house, The Elms, which stood in large grounds at the back of Avenue Road, on the western border of Primrose Hill. As a rule he invited his dramatic and his musical guests separately, but to the garden party in July all would be bidden, together with the civic, the municipal, and the masonic friends; the whole commingling in one of the most interesting gatherings of the London season. There, as you listened to the Guards' band, would you meet Dan Leno, Herbert Campbell and Harry Nicholls, of pantomime fame; in other groups Melba, Lillian Nordica, Calvé, Emma Eames, Zélie de Lussan, Puccini, Plançon, Mascagni, Hans Richter, Mancinelli, and the brothers de Reszke; and, talking with them, those pillars of the opera, Lord and Lady de Grey, Lady Charles Beresford (with the Admiral), Lord and Lady Londesborough, Alfred and Leopold de Rothschild, Lord Burnham, and Augustus Spalding.

In 1889 Augustus Harris bought the *Sunday Times*. He did it in order to protect himself against certain unjustifiable newspaper attacks which his very sensitive disposition strongly resented. The plan succeeded, and he held on to his journalistic shield for four or five years. The paper being then owned by a relative of mine, I acted as his intermediary in the purchase, and he offered to make me editor. I refused, for many reasons, and especially because he had promised that nothing should interfere

with my independence as musical critic of the paper. Ultimately Arthur à Beckett, then assistant-editor of *Punch* under Sir Francis Burnand, was appointed to the post, he being distantly related to Harris on the "Glossop" side.

Although far from making an ideal editor, à Beckett was a charming man, and he proved useful in many ways, particularly when he discovered a gigantic genealogical tree which demonstrated conclusively Harris's descent from the ancient family of the Glossops. But though he had his weaknesses, Augustus was at heart too democratic to be snobbish. He often told me that his triumph at Covent Garden was the achievement of which he was proudest; and it was to mark the emancipation of opera there from the yoke of a single foreign tongue that he changed the title in 1892 from "Royal Italian Opera" to "Royal Opera" *tout court.*

For sheer brilliancy and all-round distinction he never beat the constellation of singers that he brought together in 1888 for his first Covent Garden season. During the ten weeks forty-eight performances were given of nineteen operas. To begin with, there was a superb revival of *L'Africaine* for the *rentrées* of Jean and Edouard de Reszke and Lassalle, with Nordica as Selika and Marguerite Macintyre (a débutante) as Inez. Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* was given with the famous baritone Cotogni, in his old part of Figaro.* *Il Flauto Magico* was revived with Minnie Hauk (Pamina), Ella Russell (Queen of Night), Sigrid Arnoldson (Papagena), Ravelli (Tamino)

* This representation was, however, marred by a curious example of bad taste. In his anxiety to provide an elaborate ballet, Harris added to Mozart's simple *Fandango* a showy *divertissement* for which Berlioz's arrangement of the "Invitation à la Valse" and other pieces were utilized. The proceeding raised such a storm of protest from the critics that it was never repeated. But it taught Harris a useful lesson.

and Del Puente (Papageno); also *Don Giovanni* with Francesco D'Andrade (the Don), Ravelli (Ottavio), Arnoldson (Zerlina), Fursch-Madi (Donna Anna), Nordica (Donna Elvira), and Ciampi (Masetto).

Three Carmens appeared, viz. Minnie Hauk, Nordica, and Zélie de Lussan, with Del Puente as Escamillo. Two great contraltos, Scalchi and Trebelli, both sang, the latter for the last time here. Melba made her London début in *Lucia;* Ella Russell appeared in *La Traviata* and *Fra Diavolo;* Albani sang in *Lohengrin* with Jean de Reszke and Mme. Hastreiter; also in *Rigoletto* when given for the hundredth time at Covent Garden. *Mefistofele* was remounted for Edouard de Reszke, who also sang in Gounod's opera with his brother Jean, Nordica, Scalchi, and Bauermeister in the cast. This last group also appeared in a splendid *reprise* of *Les Huguenots.*

No wonder London was dazzled and astonished at such a display of talent. Nothing to approach it had been heard at Covent Garden since the memorable " coalition " season of 1869. It set the seal upon Harris's reputation as an impresario of the first order, and he was justly proud of the record. It is a mere truism to add that singing such as we heard in those crowded ten weeks is no longer forthcoming. I may go further, and declare that for completeness of ensemble as well as supreme individual merit and consistent perfection of vocal art, it was never afterwards surpassed.

It will be appropriate here to say a few words about the art of Jean de Reszke, whose death, at the age of seventy-five, occurred at Nice on April 3rd, 1925. When I went with Augustus Harris to Paris, to engage him for the tentative season of 1887, he had attained just half his full span of life. He was, therefore, in the prime of vigorous

JEAN DE RESZKE

Photo: Hall.

MELBA AS JULIET

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manhood. Edouard, slightly his junior, had already sung for several seasons at Covent Garden. I had seen both brothers, with Mme. Fidès-Devriès and Pol Plançon (superb artist !) in the original cast of Massenet's *Le Cid* at the Opéra in November, 1885. In that rôle Jean had proclaimed his right to be called a tenor; and in that instance Paris made no mistake, but endorsed the claim with acclamation.

The verdict was upheld no less enthusiastically at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Italian was the language employed there, at any rate at first; but all singing languages came alike to Jean de Reszke, though personally I liked him best in French, which he spoke, wrote, and sang like a native. Nicolini, a Frenchman, sang Roméo in Italian with Patti in the 'seventies with quite moderate charm. When Jean de Reszke sang the part with her in French, at the Paris Opéra in 1888, Gounod, with tears in his eyes, declared in my hearing that his dream had at last been realized. He embraced Jean as the perfect ideal of Shakespeare's lover, and told him he was "finer than Mario because he sang Roméo so divinely in French."

In those early days Edouard used to keep Jean in roars of laughter by caricaturing Wagnerian declamation *à la* Wotan, whilst I improvised a noisy orchestral din for him on the piano. But even then he was studying Walther in *Die Meistersinger* (according to Mazzucato's new Italian version) and laying the ground for Tristan and Siegfried to be sung in German. The transition took time, for he analysed these characters very seriously and strove successfully to imbue Wagner's difficult passages with all the beauty of voice and elegance of phrasing that he was capable of. How gloriously new and enchanting the charm that he could invest the music of Tristan withal,

I was not to learn until he sang it for me in New York in 1896.*

Jean de Reszke asked me to go with him on his first American tour in 1890-1, but I could not accept the invitation. He wrote me frequent accounts of his triumphs there in the London répertoire—Faust, Roméo, Raoul, Lohengrin, Radamès, etc.—and later on came tidings of equal success in the German performances, which made him very happy, he said. After his first appearance in the title-rôle of Massenet's *Werther* he wrote me a letter which showed in a strong light the intensely serious and thoughtful mind of the man, and how assiduously he was always striving to advance in his art, unspoilt by praise, untouched by flattery. The part had provided him, he said, "with one of those unanimous successes wherein the heart of the public is made to beat through a skill that has nought of artifice. The true path—that of pure emotion, the goal for which I have been striving all my life—was attained before an audience that understood nothing of the (French) text, but guessed through instinct that my conception of the character of Werther arose out of the simplicity, the unexaggerated truthfulness, which only age and maturity can grant to the thinking artist." But his hopes concerning *Werther* were not destined to be fulfilled. That dullest of Massenet's operas attained two performances at Covent Garden and was never revived. It was a season of novelties, but the subscribers wanted Jean de Reszke, now in his prime, only in the characters—Roméo, Faust, Lohengrin, Walther—that they best loved to hear him. After 1895 they clamoured for more German, and at that period of his career, both in London and in the States, the amount of work that the heavy Wagnerian

* See "Thirty Years," pp. 420–3.

rôles imposed upon him involved a greater strain than most people imagined.

Still, he refused to allow himself to be regarded as "a forced-up baritone." And I think he was right on his own showing. He argued that none but a true tenor could have done the tenor work that he did, year in and year out, from 1885 till 1900. A "forced-up" voice could not have stood it. He knew his limitations, of course. There are low as well as high tenors; and there are tenors with what is termed a baritone quality, though I could never perceive it in Jean's voice after Sbriglia had landed it on its proper *tessitura*. On the contrary, his head notes, apart from their exquisite covered quality and sustained ease of production, had the genuine tenor ring—witness the magnificent B flat that he gave out on the word "Parais!" in the air sung by Roméo beneath Juliet's balcony. How beautifully he phrased that passage; it had the same ring and purity of tone that in later days enabled him to realize the transcendent loveliness of the "Preislied."

Jean and Edouard de Reszke, supreme artists both, shed over opera in the 'nineties a radiance that opera knows no more. It was a great privilege to have heard them—a still greater one, perhaps, to have known them and enjoyed their friendship. Take them for all in all, we shall ne'er look upon or listen to two such brothers again.

It was only after the experiment of an autumn season in 1891, consisting principally of French operas sung by artists from the Paris Opéra-Comique, that the scheme of "polyglot" opera was started. That involved the engagement every summer of practically three companies to perform Italian, French, and German works to the original

text. The most distinguished German artists then living sang in Wagner's *Ring* when it was produced for the first time at Covent Garden in 1892, with Gustav Mahler as conductor. Extra performances were given under the same accomplished musician before enthusiastic crowds at Drury Lane.

The system yielded splendid artistic results, whilst unfortunately helping to defer the day when opera should be sung at Covent Garden in our native tongue.* It enabled us, moreover, to hear other great singers—among them Ternina, Calvé, Destinn, Tetrazzini, Sembrich, Emma Eames, Suzanne Adams, Schumann-Heink, Marie Brema, Giulia Ravogli, Caruso, Bonci, Scotti, Ancona, Alvarez, Van Dyck, Saléza, Van Rooy, Campanari, Journet, and Plançon. Battistini, who returned in 1905, had previously sung for Harris in 1887.

But it is not only the artistic deterioration that lies at the root of the troubles which have befallen grand opera in this country during the first quarter of the present century. For the true causes we must look farther.

The government of an opera-house is essentially a one-man job. It demands a single head, and when attempted by a "Cabinet" it has never been known to succeed. This was one of the secrets of Sir Augustus Harris's success. He may not have known from the outset exactly what was wanted; but it did not take him long to learn, and he paid a generous price for his experience. He took plenty of advice, but he gave all orders himself. He did

* Even Stanford's opera *The Veiled Prophet*, first produced at Hanover in 1881, had to be given here through a foreign medium; and so had Isidore de Lara's new opera, *Amy Robsart*, sung in French by Emma Calvé and the tenor Alvarez.

not go to Covent Garden as Gatti-Casazza went to the New York Metropolitan, after a dozen years of practical work at La Scala. But even that accomplished autocrat has not effected a greater advance in operatic administration or introduced more acceptable improvements into the *mise en scène*.

Harris began by sweeping away—with the aid of an intelligent conductor, Luigi Mancinelli—many of the worn-out conventions of the Italian stage. In his revivals of Meyerbeer he improved upon his father's traditions, which had been blindly followed at Covent Garden during the composer's lifetime, and were thickly permeated with the artificialities of the French school of that period. It was a mistake, of course, to restore, as Harris did at Drury Lane, the final scene of *Les Huguenots*, where Raoul, Valentina, and Marcel are shot in the churchyard. So much black gunpowder was expended by the soldiers that the audience was very nearly stifled; and when the De Reszkes, with Mme. Kupfer-Berger, came before the curtain their faces were all but invisible. However, this stupid anti-climax was not repeated.

In the case of Wagner the new impresario discovered that beyond the *Lohengrin* limit lay a *terra incognita;* every stitch of material had to be provided. For the music-dramas he brought over not only the Bayreuth and Munich singers, but the German conductors, *régisseurs*, and orchestras as well. He imported replicas of the original scenery, installed new machinery and stage-lighting, lowered the level of the orchestral "pit," and spent a small fortune on extra rehearsals. Wagner at Covent Garden became a byword for all-round artistic excellence and up-to-date *mise en scène*. There was at that time no opera-house in the world that could vie with ours for the

varied and brilliant work that was done here during three or four months in every spring and summer.

The operatic activities of this singularly energetic man extended over a bare ten years. He had found grand opera in 1887 bankrupt and discredited; he left it, in 1896, a flourishing and profitable concern. By force of character, indefatigable spirit, and unparalleled managerial liberality, he preserved to the end his independent position as head of the enterprise and his unassailable right to the "last word." In the unity of direction thus guaranteed had lain the safety and prosperity of the enterprise.

Another thing: "he was an Englishman!" The personnel of the leading operatic establishments in London had almost always been of alien birth. But not the director himself. For years in unbroken succession, Englishmen of ability such as Delaporte, Lumley, Bunn, Gye or Mapleson had provided the capital, managed the business side of the concern, engaged the artists, chosen the répertoire; all keeping more or less in touch with the various ramifications of a complex undertaking. (For Carl Rosa and his English Opera stood in another category. They did not depend upon the support of Society.)

It was a pity, therefore, that, after the death of Harris, the artistic management of the Royal Opera should have been delegated in turn to the two foreigners, Maurice Grau and André Messager. However able and experienced they may have been, the best that they could do was but a mild imitation of the methods of the dead chief.

The formation of the Grand Opera Syndicate in 1899 as a limited liability company, and the acquisition of the Covent Garden lease, were moves in the right direction. The fact remains that the march of operatic progress during the next few seasons was by comparison dull and uninterest-

ing. For a time, however, things went well enough, especially in those early years of the present century when a new tenor arose, in Enrico Caruso, to fill, as well as he could, the place of the incomparable Jean de Reszke.*

But by degrees decay of a subtle and impalpable kind began to assert itself. Once more adverse influences began to exercise a malign effect upon the structure and the system that had been rebuilt at the cost of so much toil, capital and devotion. Yet so slow was the process of disintegration that it had spread itself over a good dozen years, before the Great War and the dangerous rivalry of the Beechams and Russian Opera came to put a temporary extinguisher upon Covent Garden and its "grand season."

What, then, were the mistakes or misfortunes, or both, that brought this about? In my opinion the methods of the Grand Opera Syndicate were fatally restricted by limitations that Harris had never stopped to weigh, as well as by the personal interests of powerful personages who stood in the background. The social calibre of the subscribers began gradually to shift from the titled aristocracy of opera lovers to the *nouveaux riches* who at one period had knocked at the door in vain. The new class of support—indicated by the changing names on the doors of the private boxes—flattered, but did not endure. These people loved display, but did not really care for opera.

One wonders now whether things would have got better or worse had the absolute control, after Harris's death,

* This, however, Caruso only accomplished in so far that he drew crowds to listen to his beautiful voice and facile art; he brought to his impersonations none of the poetry and romance, the rare nobility of conception and treatment, which made Jean de Reszke equally great in contrasted parts like Roméo and Tristan, Raoul and Siegfried, Radamès and Walther von Stolzing, Faust and Lohengrin. It is the misfortune of the age that as a teacher this gifted artist did not succeed in making any of his pupils sing as he used to sing himself.

been entirely in the hands of Mr. H. V. Higgins. It is hard to say. In all probability he never at crucial moments had an altogether free hand. Poor Neil Forsyth continued his excellent work as general manager until prematurely cut off (drowned while fishing in the spring of 1915). He was succeeded by his loyal assistant, Mr. Percy Eales, who has discharged with ability his duties at the opera-house since that time.

A period of severe international competition ensued. The big artists had begun to demand higher salaries; and they obtained them easily—on the other side of the Atlantic. First the Metropolitan Opera House "spoiled the market" for London; then came the Manhattan, newly erected by Oscar Hammerstein, endeavouring to outbid the Metropolitan, and extending the field of rivalry by the engagement of *prime donne* of the first rank. Finally, when the opera fever had spread all over the States, and wealthy, highly capitalized centres were established at Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, etc., each engaging strong companies of its own, the demand for superlative talent rose to a point overwhelmingly in excess of the supply.

Still the Syndicate refused to pay the price. Let me give an instance. Mr. Higgins wrote to me whilst I was in New York that they would like to engage Chaliapin, who had not yet been heard at Covent Garden, but had just taken New York by storm at the Metropolitan. I witnessed his début there in *Mefistofele*, and never assisted at a more extraordinary performance or a more tremendous reception. Chaliapin, in the Brocken scene of Boïto's opera—wearing only a vast crimson mantle, contemplating the globe he holds, revelling in the sovereignty of evil and his contempt of man—presented one of the most

grandiose and impressive figures that I have seen on the lyric stage.

At the Russian singer's request, I went to see him at the Brevoort House (one of New York's old-fashioned hotels) and laid the Covent Garden proposal before him. He did more than smile; he laughed outright. I explained to him that no one—not even a singer of his reputation—could expect London to pay the inflated salaries now common in New York, where conditions were entirely different.

"I understand," said Chaliapin; "but still, if I can draw the money, I think I am entitled to a *cachet* that will at least pay for my cigarettes!"

So there I had to leave the matter, though with regret, because I knew that from the purely economic standpoint it would have paid well to conclude a bargain with Chaliapin at something much nearer his own figure, which to-day would have been thought cheap. Three or four years after this he was singing in England, not for the Grand Opera Syndicate, but for Sir Thomas Beecham in Russian Opera at Drury Lane, and it was then that I first enjoyed his wonderful Boris Godounov, a creation of the highest artistic merit.

Truly grand opera is a luxury, and Society, being practically the only purchaser, must be made to pay for it. National, as distinguished from "international," opera is quite another proposition. It must be cheap as well as good, and consequently requires a theatre that will hold twice as many people as Covent Garden to go anywhere near making ends meet. A project embodying this idea has been put forward by Mr. Isidore de Lara—a praiseworthy scheme, if a rather nebulous one; and some day, perhaps, London may see it realized.

With various autumn or winter seasons, the Syndicate "carried on" until the Carl Rosa Company paid London an autumn visit in 1909, setting a useful example by the reintroduction of the English text. Since that date the polyglot mixture may be said to have assumed a less restricted character. *The Ring*, which had been given regularly in German under Hans Richter, was now also sung in English by British or American artists; and later on *Parsifal* was mounted in both languages, though not for several years after its production in America.*

Only so long as new "stars" continued to appear—stars brilliant enough to develop into reigning favourites—did the average of good houses continue satisfactory. Society made much of Caruso (1902), took a fancy to Destinn (1904), and then, in an off-season of 1907, "discovered" Tetrazzini, a *soprano leggiero* of undeniable skill, though on the whole an overrated vocalist.

Tetrazzini "drew" magnificently, however, both in London and New York, where she helped to reduce the heavy losses on Oscar Hammerstein's extravagant ventures at the Manhattan. On the other hand, Miss Mary Garden was a disappointment at Covent Garden, but well received in New York, thanks to her admirable performance as the heroine of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which she introduced there with other members of the original Paris cast. This engagement I helped to bring about at the joint request of the late Gustave Schirmer and Oscar Hammerstein, through M. Durand, the Paris publisher, in the summer of 1907. Miss Mary Garden hesitated some time before accepting the offer, having, it was understood, made up her mind never to go to America; and

* The complete details of all these seasons are to be found in Mr. Richard Northcott's excellent compilation, "Covent Garden and the Royal Opera, 1888–1921." London: The Press Printers.

but for this opportunity she would probably never have gone there.

Four years before the Great War came to enhance the prevailing difficulties (it converted the opera-house into a furniture pantechnicon !), a very brave and notable effort was made by Mr. (now Sir) Thomas Beecham—backed at first by his art-loving father, Sir Joseph Beecham, Bart.—to stay the falling fortunes of high-class opera. It is well known that Sir Thomas lost a fortune in the process. The story is of too recent date to call for narration at length here; but its historic interest has an extraordinary value because of the part played by the Beecham enterprises in the operatic transition that set in with the twentieth century.

To begin with, they introduced fresh standards. The Russian Imperial Opera and Ballet brought to England entirely new ideals and methods, which owed their origin partly to national characteristics, partly to a novel and individual outlook in the modern treatment of all art matters connected with the lyric stage. Here was something tangible, something picturesque and clever that at once aroused the curiosity of a jaded public sick of worn-out conventions and lack of true ensemble. But the cost was stupendous; no one knew how much money was lost over those Drury Lane seasons, or at Covent Garden in 1910 and afterwards. Yet Sir Thomas Beecham persevered in his splendid double policy of bringing over strong operatic combinations from the Continent and at the same time performing interesting works in English, some old, some new, on a scale of excellence that satisfied the most fastidious æsthetic taste. Had the public response to this bold speculation continued on a par with its merits; had

the amazing three months' autumn season of 1910 been decently supported—then even the effect of the war might have proved less disastrous and there might have been a different tale to tell.

One thing is certain. The brief operatic renaissance started by Sir Thomas Beecham, like those of Carl Rosa and Augustus Harris, owed a clear and demonstrable value to the fact that it was controlled by a single mind. The impresario who does not make mistakes has yet to be born. But immense advantages must necessarily accrue to that one who can lay out his capital as he pleases, make his own choice of artists and repertory, and, besides being himself (as in the case of Beecham) a first-rate conductor, loves his task and performs it in a steady endeavour to realize the highest ideals.

Grand opera in 1921 was in such little request, and at the same time the financial conditions prevailing in the country were so deplorably bad, that Covent Garden never opened its doors all through the year except for pantomime or ballet or cinema shows. Then in 1922 the principal artists of the Beecham troupe formed themselves into a commonwealth concern entitled "The British National Opera Company," the capital for which was publicly subscribed. The undertaking apparently met with encouraging support, but somehow failed to succeed in paying its way. Despite which it survives and bides its time.

In the summer of 1924, stimulated no doubt by the fact that the British Empire Exhibition was being held at Wembley and expected to attract many thousands of wealthy visitors from overseas, the Syndicate once more entered the field with a season of its own. This consisted mainly of the Wagner music-dramas, and three operas by Strauss, including a new version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*,

wherein the rôle of Zerbinetta was sustained by its most famous and talented exponent, Fräulein Maria Ivogün. This charming *soprano leggiero* also made a hit as Gilda, as did another débutant, Cesare Formichi, in the part of Rigoletto.

In 1925 four weeks of German and four weeks of Italian opera were given under the direction of a new and resourceful group of wealthy enthusiasts called the London Opera Syndicate. As in the previous year, Herr Bruno Walter acted as conductor-in-chief, and, thanks chiefly to his singular ability, some fine all-round performances were again witnessed. The audiences, too, were uniformly large. Evidently "international" opera of the first class can still count upon the support of London society for a month or two during the season.

But, beyond this, what? Opera *quâ* national institution we are as far from possessing as ever. Covent Garden as a national asset has no more value than the Koh-i-noor or the Cullinan diamond; and, placed out of its true *milieu*, does not stand for nearly so much. We have no recognized home for opera in this country; no house that tenants can occupy without heavy loss; no great lyric theatre that the thousands who love opera in the metropolis can afford to enter in order to hear the best. Carl Rosa, had he been alive, would have been highly amused to see that whilst Covent Garden, magnificently run by the rich enthusiasts, was doing quite decent business in Bow Street in 1925, the modest English company which still bears his honoured name was simultaneously turning away florins and half-crowns every night at the Lyceum Theatre some two hundred yards away. He would have said, "You love opera well enough; but there is something very wrong with your organization of it."

# CHAPTER XIII

## ROYAL MUSIC-LOVERS

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert—Fostering the Artistic Growth—A Musical Royal Family—Recitals at the Palaces—The Queen in Public—Her Majesty Smiles and Frowns—The Diamond Jubilee Service at St. Paul's—Last Opera at Windsor Castle—Royal Interest in Opera—The Prince of Wales a Genuine Music-Lover—Frequents Covent Garden; Attends Norwich Festival; Starts the Royal College—Personal Incidents—Objects to a Statue of Augustus Harris but Approves of a Drinking Fountain and Charitable Endowments—Correspondence with Sir Francis Knollys—A Successful Memorial—The Duke of Edinburgh as a Violinist—Princess Louise at Leeds Festival; a Tea at Sir Arthur Sullivan's Lodging—Princess Christian and Princess Beatrice at the Duke and Duchess of Connaught's Dublin Concert.

QUEEN Victoria's very genuine love of music was only one among the many personal traits in that beloved sovereign's disposition which the "high-brows" of a later generation have apparently agreed to depreciate. They are willing to allow that she adored Mendelssohn and was fond of Gounod; those being points which they set down to "profit and loss," and not as belonging to the credit side of the Victorian art-ledger. What they wholly fail to understand, and consequently to allow for, was the enormous effect of the Royal good-will and interest—I will not include patronage; that is too easily bestowed—in all matters connected with the profession and the prosperity of musical art.

If I put this in the foreground, as more vital even than the question of taste, it is because in this country the State furnishes only a bare pittance towards higher musical education, and nothing at all, bar military bands,

for the encouragement and support of music itself. To a certain extent the Royal interest used to take the place of State support. It was expected to do so by that trained musician and ardent music-lover, the Prince Consort, who, whilst hoping for better things, estimated just at its full value the utterly unsympathetic attitude towards music of the Budget-makers and politicians of his time.

For what did that enlightened Prince do? He began by fostering the Queen's love of good music in the palace,* in the opera-house, in the church, and in the concert-hall. (And "good music" it certainly was by comparison with what had been the pastime of the two preceding reigns.) He saw to it that the juvenile members of the Royal family should be brought up musically—the Princesses to play the piano or sing, and all to have cultivated in them the taste for listening to first-rate performers. Then, not long before he died, the Prince Consort projected the building of the Royal Albert Hall and the establishment of the Royal College of Music; and both undertakings were carried out with splendid energy and as a labour of love by his son, the Prince of Wales (King Edward VII), who, though not in the strict sense of the word a dilettante, much less a trained amateur, unquestionably inherited a liberal share of his parents' liking for music and for the society of professional musicians. In this he was in turn to find constant encouragement at the hands of another music-lover, no other than

* Evidence of this, dating as far back as 1840, may be seen at the newly opened museum at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where there is exhibited a curious programme of a private concert at Buckingham Palace, in which the Queen and Prince Albert took part as *vocalists*. They sang a duet by Ricci, and Her Majesty was also heard in a pastoral chorus by Michael Costa, who sang in it himself, together with the Prince and the ladies of the Court. Moreover, Prince Albert sang in a male quartet from Rossini's opera *Comte Ory*, having for his companions the great tenor Rubini, the no less distinguished basso Lablache, and the before-mentioned "Signor Costa."

the beautiful and accomplished Princess of Wales, our revered Queen Alexandra.

For twenty years or more after the death of the Prince Consort (December, 1861) little musical entertainment, beyond an occasional performance by the "Queen's Private Band," was allowed at Windsor Castle or Balmoral; and during that time Queen Victoria never attended a public concert. Well do I remember what a source of regret, not to say irritation, this was to the musical stars of the 'seventies. The situation was neatly summed up once in my hearing by Sir William Cusins, "Master of the Musick."

"No one dares to suggest to the Queen that the moment has arrived for her to be present again at the State Concerts; and nobody would succeed if they tried. Yet Her Majesty continues to take the greatest interest in them, and requires every programme (there were two each season) to be submitted for her approval. If she sees the name of a new performer she has to be told all about the career and family history of the artist before consenting to his or her appearance."

"But," continued Sir William, "what will make an even greater difference will be when the Queen revives her old custom of inviting celebrities to the Castle to sing or play before her privately. It is the force of the Royal example that is so valuable. It encourages Society to spend more money on concerts given in their own houses. It would circulate thousands of pounds among the profession where now it circulates only hundreds." This was to be abundantly verified when at length the Queen made up her mind to revive the "old custom" which now, alas! has once more passed into desuetude.

But it was good while it lasted. Among still-living singers, Dame Emma Albani, Mme. Zélie de Lussan, Mr.

Edward Lloyd and Mr. Ben Davies were especial favourites of the Queen; while other well-known artists, native as well as foreign, were frequently "commanded" to Windsor to make music for Her Majesty, followed by the inevitable memento—a jewel or a signed photograph—as a token of the pleasure that had been felt. The same thing was done at Marlborough House, though it may be noted as an interesting fact that the same musicians were rarely accorded the double honour of being asked to sing or play at both palaces. Anyhow, it was always the welcome story of "how gracious" the Queen or "how sweet" the Princess had been; how the Queen had enjoyed Mozart or Beethoven or Schubert as well as Mendelssohn and Gounod; how the Princess was content to listen to "classical" music of any kind, as, indeed, she used to demonstrate by her regular visits to the Pops and Charles Hallé's recitals.

I saw Queen Victoria at many public functions. First I count the Jubilee procession of 1887, which I witnessed from the balcony of the Piccadilly entrance to the old St. James's Hall. (I had been too high above the street to see faces well when, in 1872, I gazed down from the third floor of Gillows', now Selfridge's, in Oxford Street, upon the cortège passing on its way to St. Paul's to the Thanksgiving service for the recovery of the Prince of Wales.) Both were wonderful sights; but the Jubilee was the more interesting, if only for the unforgettable equestrian group of foreign princes, including the German Crown Prince (afterwards the Emperor Frederick), who sat his horse like a statue, carrying in his outstretched hand his English field-marshal's baton.

I had been told that the Queen was never seen to smile in public. As a rule it may have been true; like the story

that the cushions of the Royal carriage rested upon responsive springs, in order that Her Majesty might bend the more easily when bowing right and left to the people. Anyhow, on that Jubilee day I was to behold an exception to the rule, since, by a lucky chance, the procession halted for a moment opposite St. James's Hall, and something occurred that must have amused the Queen. It brought to her lips the sweetest, happiest smile that could possibly be imagined, and it impressed me so much that the memory of it haunted me for many a day.

But six years later, at the opening of the Imperial Institute, I was equally to have the privilege of seeing Queen Victoria in a brief but lively outburst of temper. It occurred just outside the main entrance, after the conclusion of the opening ceremonial. Her Majesty had re-entered her State carriage, accompanied by the Princesses; the escort had formed up, and the gillies (one of them, I think, the famous John Brown) had climbed up into the rumble. Then for some reason—what it was no one ever heard—the cortège refused to start. In five seconds, not more, I saw the Queen turn round, looking annoyed if not alarmed, and give an order to one of the gillies. He jumped down and ran towards the front of the procession. Ten seconds later he had not returned, and the storm broke.

I distinctly heard the Queen's voice exclaiming loudly, "Who is responsible for this? What has happened to prevent their starting?" The look on the face was now one of positive anger, and there was even some gesticulation with a parasol. Then an equerry rode up and, before there was time for him to be committed to the Tower, he managed to get out a word of explanation. At that moment, fortunately, the escort began to move, and the crowds

resumed their interrupted cheering. When the carriage started the Queen was still talking volubly, but did not forget to give us a parting bow. The whole affair had not lasted more than a minute; long enough, though, to enable me to see Her Majesty thoroughly out of temper.

To the Albert Hall the Queen only went once or twice after the State opening in 1871. It was by special request of the Prince of Wales that she attended an afternoon performance of Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Golden Legend* on May 8th, 1888. Sullivan was *persona gratissima* both with the Queen and the Prince, and of course he conducted his cantata himself—after Sir Joseph Barnby had led his choir in the National Anthem. I was allowed to stand inside the Royal entrance and witness the Queen's arrival. With her were Prince and Princess Christian, Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll), and Princess Helena Victoria. Her Majesty was received by the Prince of Wales, and it was charming to see him offer his Royal mother the support of his arm to mount the lofty staircase, the aid of the lift being firmly declined. On this occasion the Queen was radiant, and Sir Arthur told me later she had said many complimentary things when receiving him in the Royal ante-room after the performance.

At the Diamond Jubilee Service in 1897 it was my good fortune to sing in the choir on the steps of St. Paul's. (I owed this to the kindness of Sir George Martin, even as I owed to another old friend, Sir Frederick Bridge, the opportunity of singing in the choir at Westminster Abbey at the coronation of his present Majesty, King George V.) The principal item in the service was the excellent Te Deum composed by Sir George Martin; and when we met in the Cathedral to rehearse it, I was astonished to find how many prominent singers and musicians had been

included in that vast and notable choir—too many to be named here. I remember we put on our surplices in the crypt, and, when we stood hatless outside the great West door, everybody uttered a private thanksgiving for the perfect "Queen's weather" which prevailed that summer.

Too often has that unparalleled open-air function been described for repetition to be necessary now. The great Queen, celebrating her sixty years of sovereignty, sat just below us in her familiar State landau, in the middle of a gorgeous crescent of great personages on horseback. For the rest, St. Paul's Churchyard, looking towards Ludgate Hill, offered a magnificent *coup-d'œil*, a glorious mass of colour, iridescent with shining gold and silver and with burnished military accoutrements. Grateful were we for the slight haze that prevented the June sun from beating too strongly upon our unprotected heads. It was a simple but beautiful thank-offering of song and prayer, lasting little over half an hour; and twice during that time did I notice the Queen raising her handkerchief to her eyes to wipe away a furtive tear. It was plain that she was deeply touched.

One more scene—the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle, as arranged for an operatic performance, in July, 1900, the summer before the Queen died. The Covent Garden artists were singing *Faust*, cut down to three hours, but still rather too long (9 p.m. till midnight) for a venerable lady of eighty-one. From the place next the gangway where I was honoured with a seat, I saw the Queen more closely than ever before as she was wheeled past in her chair. On entering, Her Majesty looked fairly bright, and she listened from the daïs throughout with unbroken attention, apparently enjoying the opera immensely. On leaving, however, I could perceive that she was extremely

*Seated (left to right):* Jean de Reszke, Maurice Grau, Victor Capoul.
*Standing:* Pol Plançon, Edouard de Reszke.

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tired and weak, perhaps suffering. She stared straight in front of her and turned neither to one side nor the other.

Yet five minutes later the Queen was in the Green Drawing Room, receiving and thanking the principal members of the company, presented by Earl de Grey. Her Majesty handed the Cross of the Victorian Order to Edouard de Reszke, a sapphire and diamond bracelet to Suzanne Adams, a framed portrait to the evergreen Bauermeister, a silver cigar-box to Maurice Grau, another to Neil Forsyth, a gold cigarette-case to Flon, the conductor; with a gift of some kind for all the others, from Saléza, the Faust, down to Bruce Smith, the scene-painter. That was the last time I saw Queen Victoria. Seven months later I was in St. James's Street watching a gun-carriage go past with a coffin covered by a Union Jack and surmounted by a huge orange-coloured wreath, on its way to Paddington and Frogmore, to the strains of what was then a new military funeral march—the "Marche Funèbre" of Chopin.

Nearly four years previously I had been permitted, through my lamented friend Sir F. Paolo Tosti, to send Her Majesty a copy of a lecture which I gave before the Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts on "Opera in England during the Reign of Queen Victoria." A little later, Tosti wrote me that Miss Phipps had told him "how much the Queen had enjoyed the lecture, especially that part of it referring to the operas which she had witnessed with the Prince Consort." Also that "Her Majesty had shown great interest in the late Mr. Carl Rosa's valuable work on behalf of English opera"; and, finally, that "the Queen had had the lecture read over again to her two or three times." So towards the end her interest was

clearly maintained towards music in general and opera in particular.

"The Prince"—there existed only one in British parlance from the time Prince Albert died until King Edward the Seventh came to the throne—was something more than a *professed* lover of the arts which he "protected." He was genuinely fond of good pictures, of the drama, of music. He visited an art gallery now and then, and talked in his annual speech at the Royal Academy banquet about pictures that he had actually seen. He seldom let a week go by without going to the theatre. Like his Royal mother before him, he invited actor-managers like Henry Irving, Charles Wyndham, George Alexander, John Hare, Squire Bancroft, Herbert Tree, Charles Hawtrey, Forbes Robertson—all of whom were duly knighted—and many others to bring their companies to perform at Windsor Castle, Sandringham and Balmoral. I suppose these might be termed the "halcyon days" of the dramatic profession.

His genuine and strongly marked partiality for music, and for operatic music in particular, the Prince inherited from both parents, without, however, imitating their example so far as to become an executant. But, when it was music that he liked, His Royal Highness was a splendid listener. Night after night one might observe him, as he sat in the corner of the omnibus box on the "prompt" side of the pit tier at Covent Garden in the 'nineties, and have ocular proof of his complete absorption in the music of the opera—the more familiar, of course, the better.

There were certain "tit-bits" that invariably excited him, especially in the operas of Meyerbeer, his favourite composer. For instance, the final ensemble in the second

act of *Les Huguenots*, in the gardens at Chenonceaux, never failed to arouse him. When the whole of the characters joined in the *stretto* and the two sopranos, Marguerite de Valois and Valentine, ran up to their prolonged high C, holding it for bars in succession, you would behold the Prince in a very ecstasy of delight, scarcely able to hold himself in his armchair, always beating time vigorously with his opera-glass on the ledge of the box. The "Bénédiction des Poignards" in the fourth act had the same effect; and there was likewise a moment in Wagner—the stirring chorus on the arrival of Lohengrin in his swan-drawn bark—that evoked precisely similar symptoms.

Tosti was fond of relating how, on his visits to Sandringham, when there was nothing else to do in the evening after dinner, he would be made to sit down at the piano and entertain them all—the Prince and Princess, their guests, and the members of the Royal household—with a selection from some opera. The Prince invariably asked the same question, "Now then, Tosti, which opera is it to be to-night?" And the choice was extensive, for the gifted Paolo (or was he already Sir Paolo?) knew at least thirty of the most popular operas by heart. But in the end the Prince would generally plump for the one that he knew well enough to beat time to.

He could listen to serious music too—not from choice, perhaps, but from a sense of duty if he thought it might benefit some good cause. Thus, oratorio bored him; yet he would sit through best part of one occasionally at a Festival. (I heard him tell Lord Suffield at Norwich in 1884, during the interval, that he "had had just about as much of the *Redemption* as he could stand.") He made it a rule to attend if possible the concerts of the

Royal Amateur Orchestral Society, because there he could smoke his cigar amidst a *coterie* of friends, and so enjoy even a Haydn or a Mozart symphony. As his speeches showed, no one knew better than the Prince what the teaching and cultivation of music meant for the nation; and no one could have worked harder than he did to secure the £120,000 that put the Royal College on its feet. The so-called "National Training School" had been a partial failure; but, with the help of Sir George Grove and Sir Arthur Sullivan, the Prince made the College a possibility.

It was during the Norwich week that I had the honour of being presented to His Royal Highness by Lord Suffield, whose bust he unveiled, as Grand Master of the Freemasons, at a Provincial Grand Lodge; Lord Suffield being then the Provincial Grand Master for Norfolk. And here occurred an interesting example of the Prince's retentive memory. He wanted to know whether I was the composer of a "Grand Exhibition March" (of which he had accepted the dedication through Lord Suffield) written for the Paris Exhibition of 1878. I replied in the affirmative and stated that it had been played both in Paris and London by the band of the Grenadier Guards under Lieut. Dan Godfrey. This I mentioned really in reply (better late than never) to the following letter:

46, Upper Grosvenor Street, W.
*January 28th*, 1878.

DEAR MR. KLEIN,—His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has kindly acceded to my request, and you have permission to dedicate your March as you proposed (to H.R.H. the President of the British Commissioners). Perhaps you will let me know if you succeed in having the March played by the bands in the Paris Exhibition.—Yours faithfully,

SUFFIELD.

It is common knowledge that the renaissance of grand opera in London—the revival of the glories of Covent Garden actually lasted some twenty-five years—was largely due to the personal influence and example of the Prince and Princess of Wales. They went to the Opera whenever they had a night to spare. His Royal Highness never sat in the Royal box; and when not occupying his corner seat on the pit tier, or the still deeper smoking lounge that Sir Augustus Harris fitted up for him below the ground floor, he might often be seen alone strolling round the corridor, studying the names on the doors of the private boxes, sometimes having one opened to visit a personal acquaintance. More than once I happened to be passing at such moments, and if the Prince saw me the honour of a smile or nod of recognition was never lacking.

The Prince of Wales was exceedingly partial to Sir Augustus Harris, who had earned his confidence and esteem by the splendid way in which he had carried out the Royal wishes, and in so doing elevated "polyglot" opera to a level that it had never before attained. After the death of the genial impresario, in 1896, a fund was raised to do honour to his memory (of which I was one of the two joint secretaries), and it was proposed that a statue of Sir Augustus should be placed on the grand staircase of the opera-house in Bow Street. I then wrote to Sir Francis Knollys asking the Prince to become the patron of the fund and graciously to signify his approval of the suggested form of the memorial. Here is the reply* that I had to place before an astonished committee:

* This and the two following letters are quoted by special permission.

Marlborough House, Pall Mall, S.W.
18*th July*, 1896.

Dear Mr. Klein,—I have informed the Prince of Wales that the idea of the promoters of the Sir Augustus Harris fund is to erect a statue in the Opera House at Covent Garden.

His Royal Highness would have thought, himself, that it would be far better and more satisfactory to devote whatever sum is raised to some institution connected with the Operatic or Theatrical Profession.

Until he knows what the Committee propose to do in this matter, he is afraid he is unable to comply with your request that he should allow his name to be connected with the Fund.—Yours truly,

Francis Knollys.

Naturally the attitude of the committee did not remain, like that of Don Bartolo in the *Barbiere*—"*sempre una statua*." A fresh scheme was at once put forward and communicated to Sir Francis, who replied as follows:

Marlborough House, Pall Mall, S.W.
26*th July*, 1896.

Dear Mr. Klein,—The Prince of Wales quite understands the wish which is entertained that a bust of Sir Augustus Harris should be placed in Drury Lane Theatre, and that a memorial should be erected over his grave. If, therefore, it is understood that, after this small expenditure, the balance will be devoted to some theatrical benevolent object, His Royal Highness will be happy to become the Patron of the Memorial Fund.—Yours very truly,

Francis Knollys.

After an interval of several months, I wrote again to say that £2,678 had been subscribed—partly the proceeds of an operatic performance in aid of the fund—out of which £1,000 would be used to endow a bed in perpetuity at the Charing Cross Hospital and £500 for a cot at the Victoria Hospital for Children. The balance would be

devoted to the erection of a drinking fountain at the corner of Drury Lane Theatre, supporting a bust of Sir Augustus Harris, executed by Mr. T. Brock, R.A. To this I received the following answer:

Marlborough House, Pall Mall, S.W.
22*nd Feb.*, 1897.

DEAR MR. KLEIN,—I have submitted your letter to the Prince of Wales.

He thinks a Drinking Fountain adjacent to the Drury Lane Theatre will be a good, sensible and useful memorial to Sir Augustus Harris, and, if you are able to send him the design *this* week, he will be very happy to look at it. He also thinks that the endowment of a bed or beds at the Charing Cross Hospital is an excellent and very proper way of disposing of the amount realized by the performance at the Opera in the summer. . . . —Yours truly,

FRANCIS KNOLLYS.

In November of the same year the now familiar memorial was duly inaugurated by the Lord Mayor (Sir George Faudel-Phillips), in the presence of a vast company of well-known people;* and so, thanks to the sound common sense and good advice of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, our efforts worthily to keep alive the memory of "Augustus Druriolanus" were voted a complete success.

The following letter from the late Earl of Londesborough, who presided over the Memorial Committee, affords yet another tribute, hitherto unpublished. It is dated July 12th, 1896, and addressed to me from Londesborough

* It may be of interest to mention, as a testimony to the popularity of the dead manager, the names of a few of the notabilities—old friends and colleagues—who attended this function. They included Sir (then Mr.) George Alexander and his wife, Edward Terry, James Fernandez, Henry Neville, W. H. Cummings, William Kuhe, Oscar Barrett, George Edwardes, Neil Forsyth, Herbert Campbell, J. Le Hay, Lionel Brough, Wilhelm Ganz, Arthur à Beckett, and nearly all the dramatic and musical critics; while Freemasonry was represented by the Earl of Euston and Sir Edward Letchworth, the Grand Secretary.

Park. After expressing regret for not attending the first meeting of the Committee, it goes on:

> Sir Augustus was so beloved by his intimate friends, appreciated by his acquaintances, and liked by the general public for his straightforward conduct, his cheery face, and genial manner, that I feel confident whatever the Committee proposes will be well supported. You are quite right in taking the necessary steps at once. Events move so quickly that something soon occurs to distract the attention of the public.—Yours very truly,
>
> LONDESBOROUGH.

The member of the Royal family whose name in the 'eighties came most readily to the lips at the mention of amateur music was that of the Queen's second son, the Duke of Edinburgh. He played the fiddle wonderfully well, having studied really hard in his boyhood. Nor did he give it up when, as Prince Alfred—our "sailor prince," we called him—he spent several years on board ship and constantly played for the enjoyment of his messmates. One outcome of that, after his lengthy cruise on H.M.S. *Galatea*, was a rather pretty waltz published under the title (illustrated) of "The Galatea Valses," duly performed by Coote and Tinney's band at the State Balls, etc. Another was an intimate friendship with Arthur Sullivan which lasted until the Duke's premature decease, and which actually marked the beginning of Sullivan's close connexion with Royalty.

Before the days when the Duke of Edinburgh had to relinquish his proud Scottish title for that of Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (which descended to him through his father), it was one of his chief joys to sit at the leading violin desk at the concerts of the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society, then conducted by George Mount. This body was presided over by the Duke himself, and met for its

first few seasons at the Albert Hall, where Arthur Sullivan conducted the society's inaugural concert in 1873.

Twenty-two years later they sat side by side at a supper-table at the Grafton Galleries, after the reception which I organized in honour of August Manns' seventieth birthday. Mrs. Ronalds was seated on the Duke's right, and on hers sat Mr. (not yet Sir August) Manns. Quite a model of its kind was the little speech in which His Royal Highness proposed the health of the grand old Crystal Palace conductor, referring to him and to Sir George Grove (also present) as the men who had "discovered his good friend Sir Arthur Sullivan."

All four daughters of Queen Victoria were not only intensely musical, but they never missed an opportunity of doing good in one fashion or another to those engaged in the exercise of the art. The Princess Royal, when she became the Crown Princess of Prussia (and subsequently German Empress) was a patroness beloved of all who stood anywhere on the ladder of fame in the country of her adoption; for she was a true and valuable friend to them.

The Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll) is not only an accomplished musician, but once told me herself that she had never enjoyed anything so much as the Leeds Festival (1895, I think) at which she was the personal guest of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who kindly invited me to meet her Royal Highness at tea at the "Judge's Lodgings." The Marquis of Lorne (soon to be Duke of Argyll) was also there that afternoon, and confided to me that he had just completed the libretto of an opera on a Gaelic subject, called *Diarmid*, which was being set to music by his compatriot, Hamish MacCunn. (It was produced at Covent Garden in 1897, and, I fear, was a decided failure.)

The occasion when I first had the honour of meeting the lamented Princess Christian and the Princess Beatrice was a pleasure that is associated in my memory with a disappointment; for on that night I was to have had the still greater honour of being presented to Queen Victoria herself. The occasion was a concert given by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in April, 1900, at Farmleigh, Dublin, during her Majesty's last visit to the Irish capital. It was known that the Queen was not feeling well, but almost down to the last moment it had been expected that she would be strong enough to attend the concert. Indeed it was only during dinner (at which I was seated on the right of the Duchess) that I learned from my hostess —herself a great music-lover—that the Queen would be unable to be present.

It was certainly a delightful concert, given by well-known artists; and I may mention this without immodesty because my own share in it was limited to the secondary one of playing certain piano accompaniments and a harmonium obbligato. During the interval the Lord-Lieutenant (Earl Cadogan) introduced me to the two Princesses, when Princess Christian remarked: "I already knew Mr. Klein as a critic. I have been reading him in the *Sunday Times* for years!" Next day, on my arrival in London, I found a charming telegram from the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, thanking me for helping to make their concert a success. Since then the Duke has more than once referred to it with a sigh: "Ah yes, Farmleigh—those were the good old days!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### ALBENIZ : JOACHIM : SAINT-SAËNS

Music on its Native Heath—Brahms heard at Leipzig—French Comic Opera in Paris—Adèle Isaac—Some Juliettes—Studying Spanish Rhythms — Isaac Albeniz : Pianist and Composer — His *Pepita Jiménez* at Barcelona — The Rambla at Christmastide — Albeniz Criticizes Breton's *Dolores* — Spanish Tunes and their Use — An Excursion to Monserrat—Rehearsing at the Liceo—Letter from Verdi to the Pepita—The Production—Albeniz Writes from Leipzig and Prague : his |Claim| on England—First Visits to New York and Christiania—A Talk with Ibsen—Preparing the First English *Parsifal* — Joachim Shows me the Berlin Hochschule — Dinner with him at the Mendelssohns'—A Trio and a Farewell—With Saint-Saëns at Namur on the Eve of the Great War—A Letter from him

I HAVE travelled abroad a good deal since I made my first trip to the Continent in 1879 (*see* Chapter VI). I was twenty-three then, and my friend Bizet Michau had always been preaching to me about the advisability of seeing foreign countries. "It is the finest form of education that I know of for a young fellow who wants to study art, especially when he has French, German, and Italian *au bout de la langue*. Painting, music, the stage—you can enjoy them more cheaply, more easily in Continental cities than you can in London. We get the gems and the stars in every branch, but we don't get the atmosphere, the touch of national character."

Michau's advice was excellent, as usual, and as soon as I was able I took delight in following it. I have seen most of the famous picture galleries, from the Prado at Madrid to the Hermitage at St. Petersburg; from the Uffizi at Florence to the Hof-Museum at Dresden; from the Louvre to the galleries at Amsterdam and the Hague; and from

the Viennese collections to the Pinacothek at Munich. They helped to afford me a liberal education in the great sister Art of Painting. They contributed, moreover, to mental recreation, in the same way that, for the physical, Switzerland and the Tyrol yielded me healthy walks and mountain-climbing.

Of music heard and musical celebrities encountered in foreign lands I cherish many agreeable recollections. I have always retained the most definite and lasting impressions of works heard in the country that gave them birth. Operas, plays, choral compositions, even symphonies have never to my ears sounded so well elsewhere. When I listen to Brahms's third symphony my mind always reverts subconsciously to a superb interpretation of it that I heard in the 'nineties at the Leipzig Gewandhaus under Nikisch. His first symphony, by the way, I never heard before the first performance in England at Cambridge in 1877,* when Brahms received his doctor's degree *in absentiâ*, while Joachim, besides providing a new overture as his "exercise," played the Beethoven violin concerto. So the No. 1 invariably recalls Cambridge.

That, however, was a very special case. At Paris, in 1879, I went to the old Opéra-Comique to hear Auber's *Diamans de la Couronne*. I had heard it once before at Covent Garden, with Adelina Patti in the principal rôle; and then it was the matchless singer rather than Auber's sparkling music or the general rendering that fixed my attention. In Paris the Caterina was that very clever soprano, Mme. Bilbaut-Vauchelet; and it was not her singing alone that stood out. There, perfection of ensemble

* Brahms's Symphony No. 1 in C, op. 68, was performed for the first time at Karlsruhe on November 6, 1876.

was the *clou*, with the added delight of a theatre exactly fitted for an opera of this size—the unlucky theatre that was soon after destroyed by fire with terrible loss of life.

Again, in February, 1881, though I missed by a week or so the *première* of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann*, naturally I heard the original cast—never since approached in Paris or anywhere else. This fine posthumous work by the popular composer of *La Grande Duchesse* was accorded special honour. He had died only four months previously, and the uncompleted score had to be finished by Ernest Guiraud.

The distribution of rôles was, of course, in strict accordance with Offenbach's intention, not, as often nowadays, with a different soprano for each of the three heroines. The gifted Adèle Isaac was equally brilliant as Olympia, Stella, and Antonia; while the baritone, Taskin, was no less admirable as Lindorf, Coppélius, and Dr. Miracle. Two other famous artists, Marguerite Ugalde and Talazac (the latter afterwards often heard in London), were the Nicklaus and the Hoffmann; in short, a " star " practically in every part. It took five-and-twenty years for this opera to reach our shores, but when first produced at Covent Garden in 1910 it had no fewer than twelve performances.

Mention of Adèle Isaac reminds me that I also heard her at the Opéra-Comique in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, prior to its transfer in November, 1888, to the Opéra with Patti and the De Reszkes in the leading parts. Mlle. Isaac was not only an accomplished singer but a consummate actress. I did not prefer her Juliette to that of Mme. Miolan-Carvalho, the original; but it excelled in a dramatic sense Patti's impersonation at Covent Garden, which she then sang in Italian, first with Mario and later

with Nicolini. In 1888 the two Juliettes again changed places in my estimation. Patti's superiority when she first sang the part in French, under Gounod's own tutelage, was so marked in every respect as fairly to establish her supremacy in the rôle for all time. And that was Gounod's opinion too.

Spanish rhythms had not quite the familiar ring when I was young that they have to-day. The first that I can call to mind was the *bolero;* and for a long while it was the only common one. It was indeed, a popular "song and dance" feature in Royalty and Gaiety burlesques. I can still recall Fred Leslie and Nelly Farren spinning madly round the stage to some *bolero* refrain, in what the bill described as a "wild Spanish dance," with castanets manipulated in the orchestra. Few of us had ever heard of a *habañera* until Trebelli introduced Carmen's *air de fascination* in 1876-7; and even then one could not be quite sure whether it derived its peculiar saltatory character from the descending semitones of the melody or from the "one dotted, two even" quavers in the bass.

Anyhow, it sounded deliciously Spanish. As a matter of fact, it was through two distinguished Frenchmen, Bizet and Massenet, that these Spanish rhythms first reached English ears, with the added zest of modern orchestration. Then in the 'eighties Sarasate was coming into range with his stimulating "Spanish Dances" for the violin. How amazingly clever they sounded, how tender and exciting by turns, how well written for the instrument! Above all, how exquisitely Sarasate played them!—the "Jota Aragonese," the "Zapateado," the "Sevillana," and the "Habañera." We were at last beginning to learn something about Spanish music.

Then in 1889 came Isaac Albeniz. We knew him first as a charming pianist, a delightful Chopin-player—not as a concert conductor as someone has said, scarcely as a composer yet, beyond the delicate trifles that he played at the Crystal Palace and elsewhere. Even his light opera, *The Magic Opal* (Lyric Theatre, 1893) was more French than Spanish; it afforded no hint of the national qualities which were to blaze forth in "Catalonia" and "Iberia." His playing, though, was a joy; the delicacy of his touch, the grace and elegance of his arabesques, were things to be remembered. It was only after he had grown too stout that the pianist succumbed and the composer took his place.

Albeniz and I became close friends. I had known him from his début, and grew to like him personally more than most men for his warm, lovable nature, his frank, gracious manner and sunny disposition. We had a mutual friend in the late Lord Latymer (then Mr. Francis Money-Coutts), heir of the famous Baroness Burdett-Coutts—at whose flat in Walsingham House (where the Ritz Hotel now stands) we frequently met.

I recollect particularly an interesting lunch in 1895 at which, in addition to Albeniz and myself, were present the poet Richard Le Gallienne, George (now Lord) Askwith, K.C., dear old John Lane, and that excellent soldier-musician Herbert Bunning. I then first ascertained that our host, a poet of no mean ability, was the author of Albeniz's serious opera, *Henry Clifford* (mounted earlier in the year at Barcelona), and that he had written another libretto founded upon Juan Valera's novel, *Pepita Jiménez*, the music of which was completed and ready for production, also at Barcelona.

The truth was that Francis Coutts had taken Albeniz

into his exclusive possession. (He was allowing him a regular income, and continued it until Albeniz died in 1909.) Both of them wanted me to make the journey to Barcelona, to spend my Christmas holiday there, and to be present at the first performance of *Pepita Jiménez* at that fine old opera-house, the Liceo. I accepted the invitation after some hesitation, on the understanding that I should be going as a friend, not a critic—i.e. free to write or be silent, as I pleased. Well, I have always been glad that I went. It was one of the most delightful experiences of my life. And I *did* write about it.*

Albeniz in his native land was, if possible, a more interesting and more winning personality than the artist I had known in London. Like a traditional Spaniard, he overwhelmed me with hospitable attentions; he was most solicitous for my comfort, and quite determined that time should not hang heavily on my hands. He had been living in Barcelona some weeks when I arrived, a little before Christmas, 1895, and the rehearsals of *Pepita* were in a fairly forward state; but, owing to an eleventh-hour change of cast, he had no hope of producing the opera before the end of December, or even early in January.

Anyhow, he insisted on my stopping for it. To pass the time, he would take me to see all the sights so far as rehearsals would permit. He had to play for the latter himself, and after attending one I understood why. The music of *Pepita* was a trifle difficult, and the composer alone was able to inspire the artists with the necessary degree of energy. The parts were still in manuscript.

* In addition to the account which appeared in the *Sunday Times* in January, 1896, I wrote an article on this subject for the *Musical Times* of March, 1918, one object of which was to utter a protest because Albeniz's *Pepita Jiménez* had never been performed in England.

Breitkopf and Härtel were not going to print the vocal score for another twelvemonth.

So I settled down to the enjoyment of Barcelona at Christmastide, with the thermometer at an average level of 70° in the shade. The Rambla, leafiest of avenues, was a picture; the tropical trees and plants were mostly in bloom; the city, with its population of nearly half a million, seemed full of life and activity. Albeniz had resided and married there, and numbers of people knew him by sight.

He took me to the theatre and the *Zarzuelas;* and then I began to hear real Spanish music for the first time. At least its idiom now came to my ears crisp and haunting, with a languorous charm that owed little to the voice but a great deal to the method of the singer, to the effect of guitars and castanets and the beat of feet and hands. The *Cuadros Flamencos* of Barcelona simply took one's breath away. We went also to see Tomas Breton's opera *Dolores* —then at the height of its popularity; and on our way to the theatre Albeniz, whose soul never knew jealousy, foreshadowed to me what it would be like:

"*Dolores* is literally the most Spanish opera that has ever been written. Breton embodies the musical genius of the people; they love him because he gives them the tunes and the dances that they adore. It is what you would call the 'crude raw material'; but that makes no difference, no more than the familiarity of the plot. *Dolores* was produced at Madrid only a few months ago, and the *habitués* of the Zarzuela Theatre there went crazy over it—mind, the very same public that you cannot induce to listen to Bizet's *Carmen* because it is not genuinely Spanish, only a French imitation. You ask me which I prefer? I don't hesitate to answer—Bizet; only don't tell anyone I said so.

"You see, *cher ami*, I never utilize the 'raw material'

in its crude state myself. You have only to listen to *Pepita* to perceive that. What I like is to *suggest* our national rhythms, and infuse the spirit of our national melodies into my music. That suffices. Spanish music is like certain of our Spanish wines: it quickly gets into your head and makes you tired." Albeniz was right. I enjoyed the first two acts of *Dolores;* the third altogether bored me.

I made an interesting excursion with young Señor Pujol, the son of Albeniz's publisher, to the far-famed monastery of Monserrat (according to Spanish ideas the Monsalvat of *Parsifal*). It stands about 3,800 feet above sea-level, on one of the summits of the "Jagged Mountains," which rise in solitary grandeur from the midst of a vast plain some thirty miles from Barcelona. I remember hoping that I might be shown the genuine Holy Grail, but had to be satisfied instead with a view of the remains of the magnificent *Tesoro* of the Virgin, which still attracts thousands of pilgrims annually to this remarkable shrine. At night the church was brilliantly lit up and Mass sung. The picture, however, was more striking than the music; and for the sake of it we had to share a double monastic cell and remain at Monserrat until next morning.

The huge auditorium of the Liceo Theatre, at Barcelona, built after the old Continental design of tier upon tier of separate boxes, proved much too large for such a delicate example of the comedy-opera *genre* as *Pepita Jiménez*. For that reason I enjoyed the rehearsals more than the stage performance.

The music was original, fascinating, full of a new quality, of Spanish colour, delightfully melodious and essentially vocal. It had been a constant pleasure to watch

Albeniz at the piano in the smaller foyer of the theatre, accompanying and training his artists—his fat fingers making an orchestra of the keyboard. Ever and anon he would smile or nod approval, hunching his shoulders or stopping when there was a bad mistake, but always keeping that wonderful temper of his. This was Albeniz in his true element. The conductor, Vanzo, was Italian; so were the artists; and the opera, like everything at the Liceo, had to be sung in Italian.

Albeniz thought very highly of his prima donna, Signorina Emma Zilli, a soprano of considerable reputation —charming woman and charming singer. She was a great friend of Verdi's, and I have reason to recollect this, because one morning she told me she had just received a letter from the grand old *maestro*, acknowledging her congratulations for the New Year; would I like to read it? I managed with some difficulty to do so, the handwriting being very shaky, for Verdi was then nearly eighty-two. As I was handing the letter back to Sgra. Zilli, she offered to make me apresent of it.

"I give you," she said, "the autograph of the composer of *Otello*. I studied Desdemona with him three years ago, and as you see, he refers to it in this." I gratefully accepted the letter; and here is a translation of it:

Genoa,
*2nd day of* 1896.

CARA ZILLI,—Thanks for your kind good wishes. Yet another year has passed, and, in spite of that saddening thought, I remember with the greatest pleasure our little chats of three years ago, especially the hours when we were rehearsing—how merry, how joyous, and yet how urgent (*premurose*) they were! Alas, *Tempo passato* that can never return!

I am so grateful for your recollection of me whilst you are so far away. I thank you again from my heart and wish you many years of happiness and success. With an affectionate handshake,—Yours,

G. VERDI.

P.S.—My wife desires me to send you her thanks and good wishes.

*Pepita Jiménez* was received with the utmost enthusiasm, and I had the satisfaction of seeing Albeniz cheered and fêted by his countrymen—long after midnight—both in and outside the Liceo. Familiar with Valera's novel, they perceived at first hearing the beauty and refinement of a musical setting that was at once appropriate and sufficiently Spanish to appeal to their taste. Next day I hurried back to London and wrote in the *Sunday Times* as follows: "Deduct as much as you please for Señor Albeniz's personal popularity in his own country, and there still remains a sufficient balance of cold, calm criticism about the verdict to warrant the belief that *Pepita Jiménez* is destined to shed wide, if not universal, honour upon Spanish musical art."

In this country, where it could, of course, be sung to the original English text, *Pepita* has not yet had its chance.

There was talk of producing it very soon after Barcelona, and the news (premature, alas!) sent poor Albeniz into such raptures that he wrote me this:

Hauffe Hotel, Leipzig.
30*th September*, 1896.

Hurra! A hundred and fifty million times. Hurra!!! You will be canonized and I shall pray to St. Klein! That's the way to do things; believe me, nothing could be better, for they were beginning to murmur about the "pretended" success that *Pepita* (according to you) had had at Barcelona, and my kind, fraternal friends there were rejoicing to find that it had not yet been done in

London ; but—all's well that ends "all right." After the alterations that I have made in the score and the new second act, I trust that things will turn out to your credit, and that your good, dear criticisms will not be thought to have been exaggerated.

Breitkopf and Härtel are preparing the vocal score, and as soon as I have copies to begin the rehearsals with I shall leave for London, with two good months before us for study, which will be more than sufficient.

Thanks, thanks, and again thanks, dear friend, and count always upon my affection and gratitude. ALBENIZ.

In Prague, Karlsruhe, and Leipzig it was done years ago with emphatic success. From the first-named city, just before its production there, Albeniz wrote as follows :

Hotel de Saxe, Prague.
*June* 11, 1897.

MY DEAR KLEIN,—We are ready. It is like a dream ! There is nothing to be compared with the labour of love lavished by Director Angelo Neumann, Kapellmeister Schalk, and the artists, Elsner, Davison, Hunold, Sigdlitz, and Frls. Wiet and Kaminsky, on the study of my poor *Pepita*. I am sure we shall have a brilliant *première*. . . .

I will let you know the result and send you the critiques, bad as well as good. But never mind about them.

Their judgment of the work will not, I am sure, affect yours. Meanwhile, what I can assure you is that everything will be "all right."—Your true and affectionate friend, I. ALBENIZ.

The late Lord Latymer was anxious that attention should be drawn to the opera *Merlin*, the first of a *King Arthur* trilogy which he wrote for Albeniz, and the only section that the musician completed before his death. He declared it to be a great advance upon *Pepita*, and, inasmuch as it belongs to the period of the Spanish orchestral suites, I can well believe it.

To my thinking, both *Merlin* and *Pepita Jiménez* have a claim upon the favourable notice of opera-lovers, if only on the ground that Albeniz employed the English language as the sole medium for his life-work as an operatic composer. His right, therefore, to a hearing at Covent Garden is even stronger than that of Frenchmen like Charpentier, Debussy, Ravel, and Leroux, who never in their lives wrote a bar of music to English words. We love his orchestral works and his later piano pieces for the irresistible charm and spirit, the newness of treatment, that helped to revolutionize Spanish musical art and pave the way for a Manuel de Falla. Why not give his operas a similar chance ?

In 1896 my indulgence in foreign travel reached high-water mark. I had barely settled down after my return from Barcelona when I received an urgent request from my brother Charles to spend Easter with him at New York. In the previous year we had lost our mother, who for a long time had enjoyed the retirement and repose to which her life of hard work had so justly entitled her. My brother Max had died at Cairo in 1894, and my father's health was now very precarious. Consequently there were pressing reasons for my seeing Charles, apart from going to America for the first time and attending the production at Boston of *El Capitan*, the comic opera which he had written for John Philip Sousa.* Accordingly I went at Easter to New York; and it was that brief three weeks' visit

* *El Capitan* was my brother's first big success. His fame as a dramatist rests chiefly, however, upon his three plays, *The Music Master, The Lion and the Mouse,* and *Potash and Perlmutter.* Of these *The Music Master* is by far the finest, and owing to certain rights in it controlled by Mr. David Warfield and Mr. David Belasco, its performance in England has not yet been permitted. Poor Charles went down in the *Lusitania,* side by side with his old chief, Charles Frohman.

which led indirectly to the much longer sojourn that lasted from December, 1901, until June, 1909, to which I shall refer in a separate chapter.

In August, 1896, I was touring round the Norwegian fiords as far north as Molde, then crossing over to Christiania in time to witness an entrancing production of *Peer Gynt*, including, of course, Grieg's music. This beautiful play, seen and heard in its land of birth, was simply a revelation; I enjoyed every moment of it; whereas through the medium of the best of translations I had, I confess, found it somewhat tiresome.

Whilst in Christiania, I made the acquaintance of Ibsen one afternoon when he came to the Grand Hotel for his usual smoke and *apéritif*. He was then about sixty-eight, very alert and healthy-looking, but untidy in appearance. He struck me as more like a poor farmer than a prosperous dramatist. He was inclined to be cold and distant until he learned that I was an English journalist and a friend of his faithful champion, William Archer. Then he warmed up and began asking questions about the progress that his plays were making with London audiences. He was aware that *The Doll's House*, *The Master Builder*, *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, and others had been done in England, but he wanted to know all that I could tell him about them. I said that they had stirred up an unusual amount of controversy; and Ibsen seemed highly amused to hear that his partisans and enemies in England were in the habit of holding heated debates, in course of which they nearly came to blows. He puffed steadily at his cigar, and his eyes twinkled mischievously. He said little, but every now and then would stroke his whiskers and grunt out, "Fine

fellow (*feiner Kerl*). Archer!" I think he was really grateful.

When *Parsifal* was given in English in 1904-5 for the first time in America by Mr. Henry W. Savage, he asked me to undertake the duty of instructing his numerous artists in the proper vocal use of our language. This was no light task, because most of them were foreigners who did not know a word of English; and no fewer than three separate casts were required for Wagner's sacred drama, in order that it might be played on tour eight times a week—which it actually was, for forty weeks. To make this practicable, the whole of the foreign singers were instructed to meet me in Berlin in July, 1904, and there, with the two conductors in turn at the piano, they had to study the *Parsifal* text and music, under my supervision, for an entire month.

The weather was very hot; we had a scorching July and August; therefore I lived out of town at Potsdam, near the cool Wannsee, and came into Berlin every day to work. At first I almost despaired, but by degrees the sound of the English words began to penetrate the musical ears of my students. They imitated me like parrots, and, thanks to their excellent method, their enunciation of the strange language gradually grew singularly accurate and distinct.

Pennarini, the Hamburg tenor, was particularly good; so was Hannah Mara, one of the Kundrys, and Bischoff of Cologne, who was a splendid Amfortas. Poor Putnam Griswold (a superb Gurnemanz!) was also there; but the other admirable Kundry, Louise Kirkby Lunn, did not join until we assembled at New York in September; nor did Robert Parker, who was then beginning his operatic

career as the invisible Titurel. In the end the experiment proved very successful, since each cast received high praise, and the New York critics declared that the text was exceptionally audible.

This stay in Berlin is further associated in my memory with the hours—the last—that I spent in the society of Joseph Joachim. I had not seen him for three years, and was agreeably surprised to find him (he had just turned seventy-three) the same hale, upright figure that I had known since my boyhood. He no longer occupied his old apartment on the Kurfürstendamm, where I had visited him in 1894 on the occasion of the Berlin celebration of his artistic jubilee. The illustrious violinist was now staying with his friend Robert Mendelssohn, the banker (a nephew of the composer), at his charming villa in the fashionable suburb of Grunewald, and he asked me to come one evening and join the family at dinner, after calling for him at the Hochschule, of which institution he was still the head.

As I walked there I remembered I had taken a dislike to "Herr" Joachim—my idol as an artist—because he had been impatient with my brother when, as a boy, I took Max to play before him.* I remembered also how that resentful feeling had quickly faded as, during year after year, he filled my life with glorious moments. I recalled his inimitable reading of the Beethoven concerto—the work, by the way, which he played on his début at the Philharmonic when a lad of thirteen; his magnificent Bach "Chaconne" (first introduced by him at the Pops in 1859), whereof no sensible Bach-lover, if he could help it, missed a performance; likewise his

* See "Thirty Years," pp. 31–32.

superb rendering of the new Brahms concerto at the Crystal Palace in '79; not to mention the innumerable other triumphs which he achieved singly or shared with his comrades of the string quartet.

I recalled, too, the many delightful Sunday mornings when I used to have breakfast with him at the house of his brother, Henry Joachim, in Phillimore Gardens, with whom he always stayed in London. The first time he invited me was in April, 1882, in the artists' room at St. James's Hall. It was after a Monday Pop at which he had taken part with Mme. Norman-Néruda in Bach's concerto for two violins. I had ventured behind, under the wing of Arthur Chappell, to thank him for the incomparable treat. "Come up to breakfast next Sunday at 9 o'clock," he said, "but be prepared to be turned out at half-past ten, because then we begin our weekly rehearsal."

And so it had proved. We chatted on various topics at breakfast, and punctually at 10.30 in walked the "prince of 'cellists," Alfredo Piatti, followed by Louis Ries and Ludwig Straus (or was it one of the other viola players, Zerbini or Alfred Gibson or Benoit Hollander?), whilst I reluctantly made my way to the front door. I would have given worlds to hide myself in a corner and listen; but that joy, as I well knew, was not to be had for the asking, or indeed at any price.

But here I am at the steps of the Hochschule. The porter asks my name, and informs me that the "Herr Professor Dr. Joachim" will receive me immediately in his room. He was alone when I entered, and rose from his desk to greet me. "One of my reasons for asking you to come here on the way to Grunewald was that you might see the school; and also that I might show you our interesting collection of old instruments. It is quite different,

you know, from the one which Sir George Donaldson presented to the Royal College at South Kensington; and I think we have here the finer display of old eighteenth century keyed instruments. However, you shall judge for yourself. Come along."

I followed him upstairs, and we looked in at two or three empty class-rooms. Scarcely any sounds of study were to be heard, for it was close on 7 o'clock and work for the day was nearly over. Then we went into the museum. Of the precious wonders that I beheld there, my interest centred chiefly in the quaint old clavichords and early pianofortes, rather than the more delicate spinets, virginals and harpsichords; for to each of the former some history attached.

Imagine what I felt when Dr. Joachim gently raised the lid or uncovered the keyboard of one of these priceless treasures (they are still *in situ*, I trust) and remarked in his simple, quiet way, "This is the *hammerklavier* at which Beethoven composed and played many of his sonatas"; or, "This piano is the one that Weber practised on every day for years"; or, almost in a whisper, "This is an old friend of mine; it belonged to Mendelssohn." "What makes you call it 'an old friend'?" I asked. Said he, "Because this was the piano on which Mendelssohn accompanied me when I first played over his violin concerto to him; and many a time afterwards as well."*

The above incident formed a fitting prelude to what was to be an essentially Mendelssohn evening. When

* Joachim's biographer, Andreas Moser, remarks: Mendelssohn "often accompanied the boy on the pianoforte when he played in private, and almost always when he played in public. Joachim's first public appearance in Leipzig was at a concert given by the singer Pauline Viardot-Garcia in the Gewandhaus on the 19th August, 1843. At the same concert Mendelssohn played Schumann's variations for two pianofortes with Clara Schumann, and Joachim an Adagio and Rondo by de Bériot to Mendelssohn's accompaniment."

we arrived at the banker's house, Dr. Joachim took me straight into the large, well-kept garden, where he introduced me to our host. I could not perceive in Herr Robert Mendelssohn the least likeness to the thin, ascetic countenance of the composer of *Elijah;* for his complexion was very dark, his cheeks rather plump, and he had a black beard and moustache. But he struck me as being singularly amiable, and he offered me a cordial welcome.

At dinner we were joined by Frau Mendelssohn and Professor Robert Kahn, the composer, whom I knew well —a brother of Otto H. Kahn, of New York—and whose piano quartet had been performed in London at the Pops in the previous year. We were, therefore, an essentially musical gathering. The conversation, however, turned more on pictures than music, and ultimately led to some harsh observations concerning the *rococo* architecture of modern Berlin. I agreed with Dr. Joachim that it was in the main hideous. Our host was inclined to be less emphatic.

Then after dinner came the climax to my day's enjoyment—a treat as unexpected as it was gorgeous! The banker, it seemed, possessed the family gift for music as well as finance; he was an excellent 'cellist. Robert Kahn was a first-rate pianist, and neither was unworthy to be associated with the famous fiddler. So they settled down to trio-playing, with Frau Mendelssohn and myself for audience. It was a unique and unforgettable experience. They commenced with Haydn, followed on with Mozart (the E major, No 6, Joachim's favourite), and finished up with Mendelssohn's glorious trio in D minor, Op. 49.

I was still up aloft, in the "seventh heaven," when the footman came in, at about eleven o'clock, to announce that a *Wagen* was there to take me to my hotel. Joachim

rose at once and put his violin in its case. I rose too, but could not find words to express my gratitude as I bade them good night. And that was the last time I ever saw Joachim. (He died at Berlin on August 15th, 1907, at the age of seventy-six.)

It would require a whole volume to record all my souvenirs of that most gifted and versatile of Frenchmen, Camille Saint-Saëns, with whom for many years I carried on a regular correspondence. Perhaps some day I shall publish my collection of the master's letters. Meanwhile I will relate here an episode in which we both figured, on the eve of the Great War, and quote one interesting letter which I received from him on the signing of the Armistice.

It had been arranged that we were to meet at Namur, in Belgium, towards the end of July, 1914. In the previous year Saint-Saëns had twice visited England—first in June, to take part in the Jubilee Festival Concert at Queen's Hall, which I organized in honour of the seventy-fifth anniversary of his musical career. The second time was in the autumn, when he came over for the Gloucester Festival to conduct the first performance of his oratorio *The Promised Land*, of which I wrote, or rather arranged, the Biblical text.

He wanted me to see him in Paris the following Easter to talk over various matters. I could not, however, contrive that, but promised to meet him on my way to Switzerland, where I was intending to go with my wife and some friends, for the summer holidays. "Capital!" was his answer. "I am going to Namur in July to play at a musical festival which the King and Queen of the Belgians are to attend. Be there, at the Hôtel de la Citadelle, on Wednesday, the 29th of July, and you will find me."

But when we arrived Saint-Saëns was not there; nor did he appear until the following afternoon, when I met him at the Namur railway station as he was getting out of the Brussels train. We were climbing in a taxi the long hill that leads to the Citadel when he asked me if I had heard anything of the possibility of war. Certainly I had; but I told him I did not believe in it.

"*Moi non plus*," said the *maître*. "I saw the King at Brussels this morning, and he assured me he would be at Namur with the Queen before the end of the week. I hope there is a good piano at the hotel for me to practise on; otherwise I shall have to come down into the town."

Later on, after tea, we went for a walk on the heights overlooking the Meuse, and he gave vent to some not very flattering remarks concerning Germany and her detested ruler. He was interested to learn that at Dinant that morning I had found people fearing the worst; also —a particularly bad sign—that an *agent de change* there had refused to change a £5 Bank of England note for me.

"What!" he exclaimed, "do they positively imagine that the Germans will have the effrontery, the incredible wickedness, to invade Belgian territory? It would bring all Europe down on them. It would mean a world-war—they cannot be so mad! You are going to Switzerland to enjoy your holiday. I am off to Aix-les-Bains after the festival to enjoy mine. Don't let us worry over this scare."

That night Saint-Saëns sat and talked with us for a long while after dinner, discoursing about musical modernists and their fads; arguing that nothing had been done since Wagner had written his music-dramas to advance or develop the art of orchestration. "To unite beauty with realism and yet not descend to sheer ugliness or noise, one cannot go farther than Wagner did."

He was still speaking when the proprietor of the hotel, whose pessimistic mood I had already had occasion to notice, approached and beckoned me to him. "I don't want to alarm the *maître*," said he, "but a message has just come through from Brussels. The King and Queen are *not* coming, and there will be *no* Festival. The order to mobilize the Belgian army has just been issued, and I think war is certain. Will you tell him? I would rather not. I am upset because I fear that if the Germans come this way our Citadel will not stop them, and not a stick of my poor hotel will be left standing." (A fortnight later his fears were verified to the letter.)

But the lively old master—then not far short of seventy-nine and mentally as energetic as ever—took the news better than might have been expected. Shaking his fist and uttering the one word "Canaille!" he proceeded:

"There is nothing for me to wait here for—I shall leave for Aix in the morning. But what are you going to do—returning home or going on to Switzerland?" I replied that I was going on; my luggage had preceded me and was by now at Coire. I intended following it and taking the chance of no war or else a short wait in a neutral country. "Well, it is a chance; but I do not say you are doing the wrong thing. Bon soir et bon voyage!"

We parted at the door of his room. Early the next morning I caught a quaint glimpse of the *maître* in his dressing-gown, hurrying to the bathroom, just as we were going down to eat breakfast and catch the train for Bâle. Then somehow, just for an instant, I wished that my direction had been the same as his.

I did not see Saint-Saëns again, though, until after the war, and then only for a few minutes at his flat in Paris. He had aged perceptibly, and I was prepared for the news

when I heard that he had quietly expired in his sleep at Algiers on December 4th, 1921. We had been close friends for nearly half a century.

And the Swiss trip? It was a foolish adventure, if you will, but I have never regretted it. It comprised one long series of lucky escapes. We got away from Strasbourg, on the day of the German mobilization, by the last train that reached the Swiss frontier at St. Joseph (Bâle) before the rails were torn up. We found our luggage at Coire, then waited at Thusis till war was declared, and at St. Moritz till the neutrality of Italy was definitely assured.

After that we went on to Como and remained there a fortnight until railway communication with France had been restored. Then by slow degrees we travelled via Paris and Havre back to Southampton, meeting on the way the trains and the transports of the first British Expeditionary Force—bravest of the brave!—just forty-eight hours before they fought at Mons. What a relief it was to reach home!

And here I translate the letter from Camille Saint-Saëns, written on the signing of the Armistice:

Paris,
*9th November*, 1918.

Why waste words, my dear friend? What need is there for pleading?* Can I bear you any grudge? Do I not know that you are always thinking of me, just as I am always thinking of you? You talk childishly.

I spent the winter at Cannes—delicious spot; and there I made the acquaintance of a charming poetess, some of whose verses

* This in reply to a letter of mine, in which I had begged him to forgive me for not having written to him for several months.

I set to music. Then, as Paris failed to attract me, I did not return there before going to Bourbon l'Archambault for the "cure," which, however, did not prove more effective than usual. Meanwhile I visited Monte Carlo, where I attended a capital revival of my *Etienne Marcel;* and there I over-fatigued myself, the result being a relapse from which my legs have not yet recovered. *En revanche,* my fingers are better, and have remained so; but, having now attained the age of eighty-three, I have decided not to play any more in public; I shall rest upon the laurels that I won at Monte Carlo, and they were *triumphal.*

Now, bar the legs, I am feeling very well. I have written a quartet, some vocal pieces, and a "March of the Allies," composed for the Cercle-Interallié established at the Faubourg St. Honoré, in the magnificent hôtel belonging to Henri de Rothschild, who is building himself another. At the end of this month I am off to Marseilles, en route for Algiers and Hammam Rig'ha, where perhaps my legs will again be restored to me. I shall return for the month of April, and I hope then to be present at the revival of *Hélène* and *Ascanio* at the Opéra.

I was in hopes that with the Entente, French music would "reign" once more in London, but I perceive that German music still keeps its old place there, including Wagner, although the Germans have made the latter their national musician, as we have seen by their giving their trenches the names of Hunding, Wotan, Siegfried, and Parsifal. It is really incomprehensible. If it were otherwise, it seems to me that our *Promised Land* ought to profit by it.*

. . . I have done nothing better than *The Promised Land,* and I am astounded that this work should not take the place that it deserved. But what do such things matter beside the events that are now taking place all over Europe! I dare not yet indulge in feelings of joy! There is still too much mourning in the world. And yet there are some comic features in the awful drama; the thrones of Finland and Albania; Ferdinand and Boris of Bulgaria; William hanging on to his crown; all these ministers handing in

* This oratorio was only given in London once, by the Royal Choral Society, after its first performance at the Gloucester Festival.

their resignations . . . we are about to witness a transformation of Europe, a most curious spectacle, something quite unique in history !

Poor Music, in the midst of all this chaos, cuts a sad figure. . . .

If I am still living next year and my health permits, I shall certainly come to London, if only to see you and the charming Mrs. Klein, to whom please present my respects.

Your collaborator and *grand ami*,

C. St.-Saëns.

When his one-act "poème-lyrique," *Hélène*, was mounted at Covent Garden in 1904 (with Melba in the title-rôle) Saint-Saëns asked me to provide an English adaptation of the text. I did so with the utmost pleasure, but the success of the little opera was not such as to justify its being given at any time in English dress. Nevertheless, the composer insisted on offering me a tangible expression of his gratitude, in the shape of a beautiful old Greek coin, said to represent the fair Helen herself, which he had had mounted as a scarf-pin. I treasure it among my most valued souvenirs.

Camille Saint-Saëns was one of the greatest French musicians of the nineteenth century. Contemporary criticism is rather inclined to belittle certain of his more popular works ; but the ultimate verdict of posterity is likely, in my opinion, to prove that attitude to have been a mistake.

# CHAPTER XV

## SOME NEW YORK MUSICAL MEMORIES

The Real James Huneker—My Social Receptions—Marc Blumenberg of the *Musical Courier*—Betwixt Devil and Deep Sea—Writing for the *New York Herald*—News *v.* Criticism: Fritzi Scheff's Escape—American Journalism—My Letters of Introduction—August Belmont and William C. Whitney—An Afternoon with Andrew Carnegie—He Declines a Presidency but Sympathizes with the N.A.T.S.—Mr. Carnegie and his "Pipes of Peace"—New York Hospitality——The Pilgrims and the Lotos Club: Suppers to Saint-Saëns and Richard Strauss—Patti's Farewell to America—Opera in New York—The Garcias: Manuel's Immersion—Maurice Grau and Heinrich Conried at the Metropolitan—Otto Kahn's Choice of Gatti-Casazza—Rise and Fall of Oscar Hammerstein—Some Stars.

I HAVE been told that the years I spent in America, from Christmas, 1901, until May, 1909, were the "lean" ones of my life. I do not agree; and I ought to know. Apart from the experience itself and the gain of many new friends, there was much to compensate for what I lost through long absence from the Motherland. Besides, I came to London each summer to teach and write, and that at least prevented my being forgotten.

Those American friends comprised some of the most interesting people I have ever met. Among the first to greet me was James Huneker, loyal companion of my brother Charles, and as devoted to the theatre as he was to music and painting. I had met Huneker in London soon after his appointment to the New York *Sun* and when he was writing his *Melomaniacs*. He was delighted when I told him his book on Chopin had been read and criticized all over Europe. I asked him how he had come to make a special study of the Polish master.

"Well, you see," said Huneker, "the piano was my instrument, and the man whom I liked best to hear play Chopin was Rafael Joseffy, my third and last teacher, under whom I myself was assistant teacher here at our Conservatory of Music for about ten years. If you absorbed Joseffy you had to absorb Chopin, and that's all there was to it. It would have been the same, probably, if I had studied with Pachmann or Paderewski."

Huneker was a greater critic than he was a performer, though I admit he played the piano charmingly and like a true artist. I met him occasionally at concerts, and once or twice sat beside him. I was amused by his running fire of criticism, uttered under his breath, just distinct enough for me to hear, but never loud enough to annoy our neighbours. He had a firm belief in the future of American music, but thought it lay a long way ahead. "Our composers are not original yet," he said, "but they may be some day." Huneker had a sweet, kindly nature, and, critical as he was, I never heard him say a cruel word about anyone.

He came to the first of the receptions which I gave at Sherry's to introduce myself to the "Four Hundred," many of whom were present because I had brought them letters from old friends like Adelina Patti (then Baroness Cederström), the Rothschilds, Mrs. Ronalds, etc. Among the ladies were Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. George Gould, Mrs. Mackay and Mrs. J. P. Morgan; among the men, Mr. Charles Schwab, the steel magnate, and Mr. Otto Kahn (then a rising young partner in the banking-house of Kuhn, Loeb & Co.), whom I had first met with his father and brother in Europe. A genuine lover of good music, Otto Kahn was to prove one of my staunchest supporters; and when he became the virtual head and mainstay of the Metropolitan Opera House, I in turn proffered him

much advice; whereof in a measure he took advantage—after I had returned to England.

Some half a dozen stars from the Metropolitan, happily mindful of favours bestowed upon them in London, had promised to sing at this reception. All but two kept their word. The actual helpers were Esther Palliser, Van Rooy, and David Bispham. It was said to have been quite a brilliant affair; but at the end of the afternoon Huneker remarked to me, as he was leaving, "Most enjoyable, all this talent, but really unnecessary in this town. Take my advice, and another time provide only one 'star'—it will do the trick." I remembered his words, and on the next occasion when I gave a reception in honour of Paderewski, took care that the future Polish President should be the sole performer. There was no jealousy, and everyone was in ecstasies.

Only in retrospect can one perceive how incidents, apparently insignificant at the time they occur, can influence for good or harm the whole course of subsequent events. Twenty years afterwards one can look back upon most contretemps with equanimity.

Most people have by now, I daresay, entirely forgotten the name of the clever man who founded and for many years edited the New York *Musical Courier*. Marc Blumenberg was a typical American of Teutonic-Jewish descent, smart, subtle, adroit, a man of powerful intellect, concealing under his engaging *bonhomie* an inflexible policy and iron will.* I had met him in London through Percy Betts, the musical critic of the *Daily News*.

Towards the end of 1901 Marc Blumenberg was

* James Huneker, who wrote for the *Courier* for many years, frequently refers to Blumenberg in his autobiography, "Steeplejack." He seems to have liked and, in some ways, to have admired him.

mulcted by a New York court in very heavy damages for a libellous criticism in his paper concerning the well-known light opera composer, Victor Herbert. So much I had heard before leaving England. I was not aware, however, that the friends of Victor Herbert had arranged to hold a banquet in his honour on some date in January, 1902, to celebrate his signal victory over the hated editor of the *Musical Courier*. On the first day I called at his office, Blumenberg asked me if I had been invited to attend this dinner. I told him I had not.

"Would you go if you were asked?"

"I don't think so. I don't know Victor Herbert, and I fail to see that the affair concerns me in any way."

"Perhaps not. But you must understand that if you are not present you will be looked upon as a friend and supporter of the *Courier*, and that means high treason against Victor Herbert and the Damrosches and the rest of them."

"But why can't I be neutral? I have only just arrived in New York, and there in no reason why I should take sides in a quarrel of this sort. Besides, I may never be invited."

"Well," said Marc Blumenberg, "if you do go I shall of course know, and I warn you that in this matter the motto of both parties is 'Those not with me are against me!'" And I left his office with that menace ringing in my ears.

A few days later the banquet took place, and I thought I was safe, for no request to attend or support it had reached me. Nevertheless, the repercussion was to come. The next issue of the *Musical Courier* contained, almost side by side with a satirical account of the feast, a long interview with myself dealing purely with vocal questions.

This, I imagine, drew special attention to my absence from the banquet, and the inevitable happened: I became a marked man. Thenceforward, until the day I left New York for good, seven years later, I was unable to count as a real friend one of the musicians who had taken sides with Victor Herbert; but I had plenty of opportunity for proving the existence of the concealed animosity. And after all, I had not really been to blame.

Unlike Huneker, who wrote a weekly article for the *Courier* for several years, I never contributed to the columns of that journal. Its *quid pro quo* policy, albeit notorious, did not perhaps differ fundamentally from that of many other "advertising mediums" of our day, except in one important respect, which almost amounts to an axiom: "Be careful to laud the advertiser; don't mind what you say about the non-advertiser!" Altogether, I fancy the *Musical Courier* has improved as well as prospered under the guidance of Leonard Liebling, who has been "editor-in-chief" since the death of Blumenberg.

What little journalistic work I did in New York was confined mostly to the *New York Herald*. In 1902 it had no musical critic; and almost it had no visible editor, for the supreme position was filled by the proprietor, James Gordon Bennett, from a distance of 3,000 miles, where he was yachting in the Mediterranean. He conducted the business by cable alone, and Heaven knows what it cost him to keep his directing hand upon the paper, as he undoubtedly did! The *Herald* laws in regard to criticism were curious. I learned them from the lips of the late Mr. White, then head of the department of the "three arts," an amiable and experienced journalist, who sent for me one day, not many weeks after my arrival.

" I want you, if you will, to write some articles for our music page in the Sunday edition. Choose the subjects for yourself; never mind what, so long as they are topical and of immediate general interest. We must get them in time to have them illustrated.

" I would ask you to join our staff, but Mr. Bennett has never seen you, and he is not very keen on having regular musical criticism in the paper—not concert notices, anyhow. But I think he would be glad if you could do the opera for us, when there is anything worth writing about. For instance, Emma Eames sings to-morrow, and she is a personal friend of the chief.

" Only I must tell you that on the *Herald* we never use superlatives about artists; and as far as possible we avoid expressing strong opinions either one way or the other. It is the rule of the paper, so please be careful, won't you ? "

I agreed to Mr. White's conditions and forthwith proceeded to demonstrate how little I understood what he meant by being " careful." It was, I think, Mme. Eames's first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House in *La Tosca*, and, as she really made a hit in the part, I ventured to write that she had never been seen or heard to such advantage before. Mr. White duly " passed " this daring bit of praise, but was so afraid of the consequences that he took care to protect himself in the headlines, which I found in the morning contained the following : " Mme. Eames Warmly Received as Tosca," " Our Critic Evidently Impressed." So the responsibility did not rest with the *Herald*, you see. But Mr. White warned me to be still more " careful " in future.

We got on very well during the few months that I wrote for the paper. (I was the first English musical

critic to do work of this kind in the United States; though it was slight, I admit, in comparison with the recent extensive contributions of my colleagues, H. C. Colles and Ernest Newman. They went over by invitation some twenty years later to write for months at a stretch, one for the *New York Times*, the other for the *Evening Post*.) But I frankly confess that I never became altogether familiar with the requirements of American journalism. I ought to have realized, and I did not, that there it is the "personal equation" that counts before all, at least in the estimation of the news, or rather the "city," editor. Let me give an example.

One night I went in good time to the *Herald* office (we had to be very early even in 1902) to write my notice of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which I had just heard at the Metropolitan with a splendid cast. Purest Mozart, admirably sung, was still ringing in my ears, and I found it very hard to suppress the superlatives or even to check the flow of ordinary praise. Anyhow, I could think of nothing but the musical joys of the evening. After my notice had been despatched to the composing-room, I remained for a few minutes to chat with Mr. White, and in course of it I mentioned casually that the popular Miss Fritzi Scheff had had a narrow escape that evening. She was standing in the wings when a heavy bit of scenery fell over and only missed her by a foot or two.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. White suddenly very excited, "you haven't 'featured' a thing like that in your article?"

"I'm sorry, but I have not even referred to it."

Glancing at the clock, he rushed from the room, and, in less than three minutes, returned with my "copy" in his hand.

" Here you are ! Luckily it had only just been given out. You have ten minutes in which to cut it down and devote half your space to what happened to Fritzi Scheff. That is far more important than the performance, and you can make it as sensational as you please. If you don't, the others will ! "

He was right. Next day all the papers contained big headlines announcing " Fritzi Scheff's Close Call " and her " Narrow Escape from Death." About her impersonation of Cherubino there was scarcely a word. Thus was I to learn that in American journalism—since imitated elsewhere—the " news item " came first, the criticism afterwards.

But to teach singing, not to write about music—never much of a " paying proposition " anywhere—was the main purpose of my going to New York. Nor did I go there (as some clever *Herald* correspondent had cabled from London, after my speech at the farewell dinner given me by my friends at the Princes') on a " special mission to improve the English accent of the American people "; nothing quite so ambitious. Among my letters of introduction were three of a public character of which I was rather proud, and as they have never to my knowledge been published, I may perhaps be forgiven for reproducing them here:

Craig-y-Nos Castle.

*November 12th*, 1901.

Dear Mr. Klein,—I have received your letter of November 8th, announcing your approaching departure for New York, and your intention of settling in that city as a teacher of singing. I think the Americans are to be most heartily congratulated, and I feel sure they will appreciate your excellent method and your great musical ability. I remember quite well studying two of Wagner's songs with you some years ago.

Wishing you every success and hoping to see you in London before you sail—with kind remembrances from myself and my husband, believe me, yours very sincerely,

ADELINA PATTI CEDERSTRÖM.

Mon Abri, Cricklewood, London.
*July*, 1901.

MY DEAR MR. KLEIN,—I hear you are going to live in America, and to establish yourself there as a teacher of singing.

At a moment when the art of singing is in a condition of decadence, I am glad to be able to express my confidence in your ability to carry on those traditions which I imparted to you during a period of four years.

It is gratifying to me to know that the great American people appreciate the sound theories of the old school, and they will assuredly find in you one among its few capable exponents.—Wishing you every success, believe me, yours very sincerely,

M. GARCIA.

Victoria Lodge, Deauville.
*August 12th*, 1901.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I learn with great pleasure that it is your intention to teach singing in New York. No one possesses more thoroughly the true and pure traditions of the "bel canto" or those of the Wagnerian drama; and it is by the fusion of these two schools that you will be able to render important service to American students (*la jeunesse Américaine*).

As regards the method of placing the voice, the art of breathing, etc., we are absolutely in accord; there remains only for me to wish you the success which you merit, and which has so often obtained notice in England.

Accept, my dear friend, as always, the assurance of my devoted sentiments.

JEAN DE RESZKE.

I was also the bearer of letters to William C. Whitney and August Belmont, both now dead. To the latter I

went, at his banking-house " down town," with a charming letter from his bosom friend, Leopold de Rothschild. He welcomed me cordially and promised me his support, but, he added: " I am afraid music is not so much in my line as finance or racing. And, by the way, if ever you want to see some of my horses run at Morris Park, I will send you tickets for the enclosure with pleasure." Which he did on more than one occasion, and " tipped " me a winner into the bargain. William Whitney was perhaps more the *grand seigneur* (as Otto Kahn once described him to me) than August Belmont, but both were specimens of the finest type of American gentleman, and extremely kind-hearted.

Of quite a different build was Andrew Carnegie, the plain Scotsman who had spent his life in the United States without being able to spend a tithe of the colossal fortune that he made there. He had just built himself a palace on Fifth Avenue opposite Central Park; also the picturesque Skibo Castle in Scotland, which stands inland not far from Dornoch and its famous links. It was at the latter place that I made the acquaintance of Andrew Carnegie in August, 1908, when he was enjoying his annual holiday there with Mrs. Carnegie and their daughter. I was on a Highland tour with my wife, and we had travelled as far north as Dornoch, not for golf (tennis being my particular game), but for the express purpose of having a few minutes' talk with the multi-millionaire.

I went by appointment to the Castle, and he received me very pleasantly. It was a hot afternoon, and the walk had been a dusty one ; but Mr. Carnegie was showing some visitors a new kitchen garden and the greenhouses, and invited me to join them. He had on his customary Norfolk jacket and " plus fours "; likewise the contented, satisfied

smile which I had noticed when he was speaking at a peace gathering in New York earlier in the same year, as he marched up and down the platform of the hall which bears his name. The smile did not come off then, and it was not coming off now; for Andrew was in a happy frame of mind. The broad Scots accent, barely tinged with a shade of an inflection that could be called American, was strong and staccato as ever. He knew the business on which I had come, and as we strolled along the new gravel paths he plunged into it in characteristic fashion.

"So you want me to be the president of your new 'National Association of Teachers of Singing.' Well, I'm sorry, but I just can't. Mind ye, I sympathize with your objects as far as I understand them. I do think the public needs State protection against the humbugs and charlatans who pretend they can teach singing and only know how to spoil voices and ruin throats with their wretched methods. What kind of safeguard you are going to invent, and whether you will ever succeed in obtaining State legislation—much less Federal—is more than I can see. Anyhow, no more U.S. presidencies for me! I have as many as I can attend to now."

"But, Mr. Carnegie, you are fond of music. You like good singing and would probably hate to listen to bad. My colleagues include all the teachers of recognized merit in the city of New York, and they have deputed me to use every effort to persuade you to identify your name with this important movement. Please don't send me back empty-handed!"

"Nay," said my host, as we were moving towards the house, "I regret to say I must refuse. Besides, I think you ought to have a musician at the head of your association; and if so, why not yourself? You are the

chairman of the executive; is not one leader enough? Just tell your friends that I thoroughly sympathize with their idea. In my opinion every music-teacher should be registered and licensed to exercise his profession; consequently he ought to be compelled by law to prove in some way his capacity to teach. If I can be of help to you in that direction, let me know when you are ready and I will see what I can do."

There was no more to be said. We all entered the house and had tea in the drawing-room. I found Mrs. Carnegie a charming, interesting woman, and the daughter, then about fourteen, I suppose, a bright, refined girl. Everything was delightfully simple—no footmen, no fuss. After tea, on my way out, Mr. Carnegie showed me the splendid new organ which he had just had placed in the broad entrance-hall or foyer.

"There," he said, "is the instrument that I love best of all. I would give anything to be able to play it well. My father used to call the organ a 'kist o' whistles'; but (with a chuckle) I call this my 'pipes of peace.'" Maybe he had thoughts of building one like it in his newly-erected palace at The Hague.

That was the only time I ever spoke to Andrew Carnegie. He supported a guarantee fund for the Sunday afternoon Pops which I gave for nineteen weeks in New York during the winter of 1908-9; but I never had occasion to approach him again on the matter of singing teachers. Our "National Association" did not live, at any rate in its original form, to reach the highly desirable goal which it had been founded to achieve. The rock upon which we split was the question of whether and how would-be teachers should be examined before being granted certificates. One or two members of our committee preferred

to sacrifice the whole idea to the surrender of individual views, and their "filibustering" temporarily wrecked a valuable scheme.

New York's reputation for lavish hospitality, private as well as public, has always stood very high; never higher, though, than during the years of my sojourn there. I lived, by the way, in one of the old brown-stone houses in West 77th Street, a stone's throw from the American Museum of Natural History and Central Park. One of my earliest friends was the British Consul-General, Sir Percy Sanderson, and he made me a member of the Pilgrims' Society—then in its infancy, with the much-loved Joseph Choate for its American chairman.

The banquets of the Pilgrims at the Waldorf-Astoria were invariably on a magnificent scale, and the oratorical level of the after-dinner speeches was the finest I ever heard. Our English guests showed up badly in this respect; but I admit that it was hard, for instance, on Lord Northcliffe or Earl Grey to have to speak after the flowing periods of an Elihu Root or a Chauncey Depew. The eloquence of the London Pilgrims, to whom I was transferred when I came home, is not altogether of the same brand; but the spirit of the two branches is identical.

I was also a member of the celebrated Lotos Club, whose spirit, if more bohemian, is not less patriotic. Being on the Entertainment Committee, I generally provided the musical programmes for the gatherings at the old club premises on Fifth Avenue, and very delightful reunions, artistic and literary, they used to be. I remember particularly the dinner in honour of Dr. Camille Saint-Saëns, just before Christmas, 1906, at which, after I had proposed his health in French, the witty old musician

refused to reply until I had repeated my remarks in English; because, he said, he wanted to see whether my mother-tongue lent itself as readily to compliments as his own. Nothing would induce him to talk in English; but he could understand every word.

Two years before that the Lotos Club gave a supper to Richard Strauss, on the occasion of his visit to New York to conduct a "Strauss Festival" with the Wetzler Symphony Orchestra. He came on after one of the concerts, at which "Tod und Verklärung" had been the principal item, and complained of feeling very tired. However, after supper he grew livelier, and puzzled us by foreshadowing an opera founded upon a short drama by an Englishman. In the following year he produced *Salome* at Dresden; and after that I think success began gradually to "spoil" him. Twenty years ago in America Strauss was still the fairly modest composer of the symphonic poems, the chamber music and the songs.

The circumstances of Patti's farewell visit to the United States in 1903 I have related in detail in my biography of the great singer.* They were, on the whole, painful rather than pleasurable, despite the fact that the tour realized a net profit of £50,000. She was then appearing before a new generation, moved more by curiosity and "wondrous stories of bygone glories" than the desire to renew actual experience. Anyhow, this was impossible, because Patti was no longer aught but a shadow of her immaculate, incomparable self. The lovely quality of the marvellous voice remained; but the attack, the intonation, the breath-support, even the phrasing of the old pieces, had become unreliable and uncertain.

* "The Reign of Patti," pp. 356–60. The Century Company, New York: T. Fisher Unwin, London; 1920.

ADELINA PATTI IN 1890

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I think I suffered during the ordeal of that opening concert at Carnegie Hall on November 4th no less acutely than did the *diva* herself. Her amazing courage enabled her to win through. But at the age of sixty, and after fifty-three years of public life, she ought never to have been subjected to the physical demands of this superfluous American tour. When the latter was over, and Adelina Patti had become the Baroness Cederström once more, she confided to me that she had somewhat overtaxed her strength and was glad to be going back to Craig y Nos Castle for a long rest; then added, "What a pity you can't come and act with me in the dear theatre as you used to in the old days!"

Music in general, and opera in particular, were undergoing an extraordinary development whilst I was living in New York. The ground was being prepared for artistic growths such as no other part of the globe has seen. It has germinated and blossomed, this musical cult, straight out of the hearts of the people, from the very depths of the "melting-pot." To give praise for the achievement to any individual or society would be absurd. The love of music has been generously fostered and encouraged on every hand; and without the support of magnanimous millionaires no phase of it would have developed into what it is to-day.

I cannot pretend to name these men now—they are too numerous. But I know what opera owes to William K. Vanderbilt, J. P. Morgan, Ogden Mills, August Belmont, and Otto Kahn; orchestral music to Andrew Carnegie, Henry Frick, and Col. Higginson (of the Boston Symphony Orchestra); chamber music to E. J. de Coppet, the founder of the Flonzaley Quartet.

Twenty years ago New York, Boston, and Philadelphia were the only musical centres that counted; now Chicago and every big city in the Middle-West has its opera company, and perhaps its symphony orchestra as well. Only the theatres and the concert halls are dependent upon talent that comes touring or "starring" out of the East. The appetite for opera has grown by what it has fed upon; it can no longer be satisfied by companies that are second-rate; it clamours for all the available Carusos and Galli-Curcis and Titta Ruffos of the European stage. It is also listening to and applauding the pick of the American singers.

The history of Italian Opera in America dates from the season given by the Garcia family at the Park Theatre, New York, in 1825, exactly a hundred years ago.* The principal singers were the elder Garcia, his daughter Maria Malibran, and his son Manuel—my revered teacher, then a young man of twenty. The last-named once told me of an occurrence that might have put an end to the entire undertaking; and, if I am not mistaken, the story is one that has never been related.

The Garcia family were being conveyed in a rowing-boat from the ship to the landing-stage at the Battery when the younger Manuel, leaning too far over the side, lost his balance and fell overboard. Being unable to swim, he went below the surface and, when he reappeared in view, was some distance from the boat, struggling hard to keep afloat. However, it did not take long to reach the spot, and the puffing Manuel was quickly hauled out of the water, none the worse for his adventure save the inconvenience of a

* The operas performed in that season were *Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Tancredi, Il Turco in Italia, La Cenerentola* and *Semiramide*, by Rossini; *Don Giovanni*, by Mozart; *L'Amante Astuto* and *La Figlia del Aria*, by Garcia.—H. E. Krehbiel in "Chapters of Opera."

thorough wetting. Still, the ending might have been much more tragical.

(Let us stay for a moment to reflect what a precious life was spared when Manuel Garcia escaped from death by drowning off the Battery in New York harbour. It made some difference, I think, to the vocal history of the nineteenth century. Italian opera might have made its start in America just as quickly; for no doubt Manuel the elder and Malibran the peerless would have "carried on" as soon as they could find another Figaro to complete their cast. But in Europe how should we have stood had Manuel the younger never returned? The question involves some interesting speculation.

Would Jenny Lind have escaped impending disaster to become the illustrious singer that she was? Would someone else have invented that simple instrument the laryngoscope to throw a light upon the hidden mysteries of the vocal mechanism and simplify the scientific research and humanitarian treatment of matters appertaining to the throat and nose? Would there have been some other "grave and reverend signior," in place of or equal to Garcia, for singers such as Christine Nilsson and Charles Santley and Antoinette Sterling to consult in their moments of doubt and difficulty? Would any less masterful pen have been capable of defining the laws that govern the art of singing as they exist to-day? Would there have come into being a Mathilde Marchesi—great teacher sprung from a great teacher—to furnish the world with a Melba and all the rest of that gifted band of sopranos who studied the Garcia method in Paris between the 'seventies and the 'nineties? Incidentally, should I myself—— But never mind; I leave the series of queries at that !)

The immediate interest of the episode just related lies

in the circumstance that my master was spared to be associated with the foundation of opera in New York. Furthermore, I have personally known every leading impresario who has directed opera there from the period of Colonel Mapleson at the Academy of Music and Henry E. Abbey at the Metropolitan Opera House down to this centennial year. Both the men just named were clever managers: Mapleson "convoyed" and Abbey imported the best ensembles that London could furnish, and competed so energetically that they very nearly, if not quite, ruined each other.

Then Maurice Grau, Austrian by birth but American by education, became Abbey's partner until the latter's death, and learned the business so thoroughly that he was able not only to succeed Abbey at the Metropolitan, but to take over the reins from Sir Augustus Harris at Covent Garden when the Grand Opera Syndicate was formed. It was Maurice Grau, a shrewd, practical, pleasant man of about fifty-three, who was in control when I went to reside in New York. He had no original ideas whatever, but was an excellent imitator and knew how to do things well. He retired through ill-health in 1903, a fairly rich man, and went to live in France, where he died three years later.

His successor was Heinrich Conried, *ci-devant* actor and manager of the German theatre in Irving Place. It would take too long to relate how this vain, pompous, self-satisfied person, knowing absolutely nothing about opera, came to be selected for the post; but it is no secret that he owed his good fortune chiefly to the labours of Mr. Henry Morgenthau (later the United States Ambassador at Constantinople) and Mr. Daniel Frohman. At the outset Conried absorbed suggestions greedily, and I fed him with quantities of them. In a burst of verbal gratitude

he suggested making me head of a school for training operatic students at the Metropolitan, but promptly forgot his promise and almost about the school as well.

He had an *idée fixe* that it was his destiny to filch *Parsifal* from Bayreuth; and he duly carried that larcenous project into effect. This and the American début of Caruso were the outstanding features of Conried's first season, 1903-4. Mme. Wagner sought for an injunction to prevent the performance of *Parsifal*, but the United States judge refused, amid great excitement, to grant her petition. But Mr. Conried was not equally lucky with his production of *Salome* in 1905-6, for after one performance his directors refused him permission to repeat it. Then followed a period of deterioration, alike in the man and the manager, which culminated, after threats of a public scandal, in his resignation in February, 1908.*

This was a moment when everyone highly placed asked for advice, listened carefully to it, and failed to act upon it. The question was not only who should succeed Conried, but what the policy of the Metropolitan Opera House ought to be in the future. I talked it over with more than one of the directors. They declined to see that Andreas Dippel, a competent tenor in his *routinière* way, was not the right choice for the post. He promptly demonstrated it by his work as "Administrative Director." My well-meant counsel only had the disadvantage of being a trifle premature.

One day when I was lunching with Otto Kahn at his club down town he asked me if I had ever heard of Signor Gatti-Casazza, of the Scala at Milan, and whether I thought him the right man to be the new "general business

* See Krehbiel's "Chapters of Opera."

manager." I did not hesitate to say "Yes." I had never seen him, but what I had heard sufficed. He was said to be a strong, serious, capable man, and to know his job *au fond*. This was proved soon after his arrival in New York. Like the martinet he is, he at once showed his determination to rule the machine alone or not at all. I am not, however, in a position to say whether he has maintained his reputation as a disciplinarian during the whole of the sixteen years that he has been in supreme control. I only met him once, and I have seldom looked into Italian eyes that gave back a clearer look of sincerity and resolution.

It was during my last two or three winters in New York that the late Oscar Hammerstein was carrying on his powerful opposition at the Manhattan Opera House, a theatre practically identical in shape and size with the London Opera House (now the Stoll Picture Theatre), which he erected somewhat later in Kingsway. He was one of the most extraordinary personalities that ever entered the managerial domain of opera. In some respects he reminded me of Augustus Harris, but lacked his *bonhomie*, his education, his practical knowledge of the stage. He shared, however, the same spirit of courage and resolution, and perhaps had the more fertile and inventive brain. Oscar was for ever concocting adventurous schemes. He invented a machine for making cigars (he was originally a cigar-maker) that brought him an income of thousands of dollars. He made another annual fortune out of his "vaudeville" theatre. He built the Harlem Opera House, where I saw Henry Irving and Ellen Terry act for the last time in New York. He also wrote operettas, and, whether good or bad, produced them.

I make no pretence to tell here the full story of Oscar Hammerstein's operatic enterprises; indeed, it has been related already with sufficient detail by H. E. Krehbiel in his " Chapters of Opera." But I was with the American impresario a great deal during the planning and execution of his exciting campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic, and I know how it was that they did not succeed well enough to build up for him the great international institution of his dreams. His ambition was to be the " Napoleon of Opera." This he could never become; first, because he had not the Napoleonic gift of tactical prevision; secondly because he mistrusted his generals, having no real confidence in any living soul but himself; and, lastly, because he was too reckless a speculator to study conditions, financial or social, before flinging himself into a sea of extravagant liabilities.

To my mind his biggest achievement was frightening the directors of the Metropolitan Opera House into paying him two millions of dollars to leave the operatic field in New York City exclusively to them; and his biggest illusion the belief that he could successfully fight Covent Garden and tempt London society an extra half-mile eastward to Kingsway in its chase after grand opera.

I must not close this part of my story without mentioning the many personal kindnesses that I received from my friends the Seligmans, the Guggenheims, the Lorings, the Salomons, and the Zuckers—to name only a few. I enjoyed throughout the closest intimacy with that admirable artist, David Bispham, who used now and then to illustrate my lectures with his fine singing. I owed to him another good friend, in the person of Mr. Melville Stone, the

founder of the Associated Press and a true lover of music. I had to thank Daniel Frohman for meeting at his house Mark Twain (in one of his liveliest moods), whose daughter, Clara Clemens, the contralto, studied for a time with me just before her marriage to Osip Gabrilowitsch, the pianist.

Apart from Mme. Patti, I encountered many famous *prime donne* whilst they were starring in New York. Among them were Mmes. Melba, Calvé, Ternina, and Tetrazzini; others who had settled down there, such as Marcella Sembrich (at whose retirement, as at her Covent Garden début twenty years before, I was present), Johanna Gadski, Ernestine Schumann-Heink; and, last but not least, the gifted American women with European reputations, Lillian Nordica, Emma Eames, Suzanne Adams, and Mary Garden. I also met Geraldine Farrar, and saw her in some of her best characters; it is London's loss that she should never have been heard at Covent Garden.

The operatic centre of gravity has shifted to the other side. When I went to live in New York, the Metropolitan was being carried on at a loss. Every season the millionaire directors were compelled to make good a huge deficit. But gradually they built up an unassailable monopoly, buttressed with the ever-growing inclination and demand of a fabulously wealthy *clientèle*, until in 1921-2 they were said to have earned a *profit* on the season of a million dollars and in the following year one of a million-and-a-quarter ! The two men to whom this amazing result was almost wholly due were Otto H. Kahn and Giulio Gatti-Casazza.

Just before and after my return to America I saw a good deal of that accomplished character actor, Sir Herbert Tree, whom I had known well from the time he made his

mark in a play founded on the novel "Called Back," produced in 1884. He very nearly persuaded me not to leave my native land at all. I was at Carlsbad in August, 1901, preparing to act on the advice of Eugène Ysaye, whom I had met on the Ostend boat and who strongly counselled me to join my brothers in New York. One day I received a wire from Tree, inviting me to go over with my daughter Sibyl and lunch with him at Marienbad. We went, and over the coffee and cigars he made me a wholly unexpected offer.

It was to undertake the direction of the department of music in a new dramatic school which he was intending to start at His Majesty's Theatre. The proposal had attractions for me that were hard to resist, and, had I accepted it, my career in the new century would doubtless have been entirely changed. But I had already sent a cable to my brother Charles, in reply to one from him, promising definitely to join him by Christmas; I felt I had no alternative, therefore, but to refuse Tree's offer. The institution which he founded was the present Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and, oddly enough, music has never formed a part of its curriculum.

Not long after my return, Sir Herbert Tree told me he was contemplating the production of an adaptation of a French piece written round Beethoven's love experiences in Vienna; what did I think of the idea? At first I was inclined to dissuade him from it. I felt that Beethoven was an even more unsuitable character for stage treatment than Napoleon. He replied that Mr. Louis Parker had made a capital story of it, that he himself loved playing musicians and poets (Svengali and Gringoire, for instance), and that he had in view a wonderful "make up" taken from the famous death-mask of Beethoven.

In the end the venture proved an unqualified triumph for the actor, who certainly made a living personage of the great composer, both in appearance and manner, and without the smallest suspicion of caricature. What is more, he was particularly pleased with an etching of him in the part, done by my son Adrian—then a lad of seventeen.

# CHAPTER XVI

## KNIGHTLY STUDIES AND PERSONAL SKETCHES

The Value of a Knighthood—Rewards to Poets and Painters: Also to Actors and Musicians—Their Effect on the Individual—Famous Musical Knights: from Costa and Sterndale Bennett to Sullivan and Grove—The Deaths of Parratt, Stanford, and Bridge: A Strange Coincidence—Bridge and Handel's *Messiah:* a Letter—The Rise of Sir Edward Elgar—The Genius of *Gerontius*—Elgar's First Visit to New York—His Music at the Opening of Wembley Exhibition—Origin of "Land of Hope and Glory"—Sir Henry Wood's Career—Sir Thomas Beecham as a Conductor—Sullivan's "Lethargy"—Our Latest Knights.

I HAVE pondered somewhat the question of the knighthood as a reward for services to art generally, and to music and the drama in particular.

There was an epoch, of course, in our history when it really was a great distinction to be knighted. I believe Van Dyck was the first painter to be knighted by an English king. Some hundred and fifty years later Sir George Smart was the first musician to be similarly honoured—in his case by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In 1895 Queen Victoria bestowed upon Henry Irving the signal honour of being the first actor to be made a knight; indeed, when giving him the accolade, Her Majesty departed from her usual habit of saying nothing by making the gracious remark, "I am very, very pleased!"* Thirty years later still, King George conferred the distinction of Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire upon Irving's fair colleague, Ellen Terry.

* "Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving," by Bram Stoker.

Honours for distinguished women in art are not always given at exactly the right moment, nor so promptly as they are deserved. But it is good to know that sooner or later they are likely to be remembered. Thus, Dame Geneviève Ward found much consolation in the title that reached her just before her death. Dame Nellie Melba was a fairly punctual recipient of hers; and so was Dame Ethel Smyth. On the other hand, Dame Emma Albani, a vocalist with an illustrious record, a Canadian by birth, an accomplished and industrious singer, who left an indelible mark upon oratorio and opera in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, had to wait until the occasion of her "second benefit," when she was seventy-two years old, before receiving the same well-earned distinction.

Peerages were by exception bestowed upon those pillars of the Victorian era, Lord Tennyson and Lord Leighton. So far, however, our most distinguished musicians and actors have been spared the perturbation and expense of entering the House of Lords in velvet robes and ermine and wearing gilded coronets. Sir James Barrie and Sir Edward Elgar have the O.M.; Sir A. C. Mackenzie and the late Sir Walter Parratt received the K.C.V.O.; Sir Frederick Bridge was a C.V.O.; while Sir James Barrie, like the late Sir Hubert Parry, was created a baronet, and Sir Thomas Beecham, after being knighted, inherited his father's title. All of which is to the good.

But I cannot help wishing that there were some way of singling out men prominent in the fine arts other than that which rewards the clever financier, the lucky politician, or the successful manufacturer. I doubt whether its influence upon the artistic mind is as harmless as it formerly was. I believe that, as a matter of fact, social honours and distinctions do not tend precisely to encourage in the

SIR HENRY IRVING

*(From the Portrait by Millais. By permission of the Garrick Club.)*

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artistic soul a sense of modesty or gratitude. And I can speak on that subject with *connaissance de cause*, for, if during the last thirty years I have encountered in public and private nearly a dozen theatrical knights, I have in my life been on more or less intimate terms with over double that number of musical knights. In the latter, at any rate, the sense I speak of was developed only in very rare cases.

Of the musicians knighted within my own recollection, the majority received that honour during the last half of the reign of Queen Victoria. At St. Paul's the precedent was first established in 1872 with Sir John Goss (the successor thirty-four years previously of Mozart's pupil, Attwood), and it was followed up with Sir John Stainer and Sir George Martin. So far the practice has not been repeated either at St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. But *absit omen!* It must be remembered that Sir George Elvey had been organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, for thirty-five years before receiving his knighthood in 1871; while Sir Walter Parratt, who followed him eleven years later, did not get his till 1892, and then proceeded to enjoy it for thirty-four years. The longevity of these organists is truly amazing!

In mid-Victorian days the selection of musicians for the knightly honour seldom strayed beyond the limits of the above-mentioned aristocratic organ-lofts, unless to include the Principals of the Royal Academy of Music. The first of these was Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1871), who earned the distinction in virtue not only of his office, but of the fresh glory that his compositions reflected upon the English music of that period.

Quite a stir was created when Sir Michael Costa received his knighthood in 1869. Most people were

pleased, because he was popular and thought to be deserving of it; but some shook their heads over the double innovation, complaining that he was a foreigner by birth (though a naturalized British subject) and had never occupied any of the "privileged" posts. The Freemasons were delighted because he was a Past Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of England, an honour which he prized quite as much as the "Sir." Anyhow, he was one of those whom honours do not spoil. When I visited him in Eccleston Square I found his manners those of a charming, well-bred man; and the same may be said of my old friend Benedict, who became Sir Julius two years after Costa became Sir Michael.

With the knighting of Arthur Sullivan and George Grove in 1883 this system of rewarding English musicians for services rendered to their country and their art assumed a more normal, a more rational character. In other words, the responsible authorities began to see that the distinction ought to be associated with the man himself, not with the post that he happened to fill. I remember one ungracious scribe stating that Sullivan and Grove were both honoured on account of their labours for the foundation of the Royal College. That was, of course, absurd. Both men had achieved far more to earn their title, and in each case the announcement was almost hailed with a sigh of relief, as a belated *palmam qui meruit ferat.*

Similar satisfaction was felt when Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Frederic Cowen obtained tardy recognition of their share in the advance of English music in the 'eighties. The former was knighted four years after he had succeeded Grove at the Royal College; but I think he derived more

pleasure from the baronetcy given him on the coronation of King Edward, and still later the C.V.O.

It was not until 1911 that Sir Frederic Cowen was awarded his knighthood—practically forty-five years after he had begun his career as piano-prodigy and composer. His music has qualities that will not allow it readily to fall into oblivion, and he is one of the most versatile musicians we have had. Hans Richter once expressed the opinion that Cowen's "Scandinavian" symphony, Stanford's orchestral serenade, op. 17, and Parry's "Blest Pair of Sirens" were works that would endure for all time.

Sir Charles Santley was knighted in 1907, when in his seventy-fourth year. It was the first time that such an honour had been conferred upon a singer (Sir George Henschel received his five years later); and it was one of those creditable precedents which King Edward VII was fond of creating if they did not happen to exist. It was a worthy tribute to a splendid man and a great artist. He possessed one of the most beautiful baritone voices of the nineteenth century, and Garcia, with whom he studied only for a short period, once described him to me as "a singer who has a heart as well as a brain." Truly, he was consistently eminent in every branch of his art—opera or oratorio, sacred or secular music, Lieder or French songs, and his native ballads; while as an actor he won the highest admiration. I count it the greatest good fortune not only to have seen and heard Santley in his prime, but to have enjoyed his friendship.

By a coincidence, three of the most prominent musical knights of the twentieth-century creation died within a few days of each other during the wintry March of 1924. Sir Walter Parratt, Sir Frederick Bridge, and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford had all attained a ripe old age and the

highest distinction, after lives crowded with valuable work. But that was as far as resemblance between them can be said to have gone; for three men more unlike in habits, character, and disposition it would be difficult to imagine.

I did not know Parratt so well as I knew Stanford and Bridge; but as an organ teacher he was a veritable genius, and I felt gratified when, as Past Grand Organist of the Freemasons, he sent me his congratulations on my receiving a similar honour. When he was appointed Master of the Musick, Sir Frederick Bridge remarked, "Parratt should be called 'Master of the Musick and the Chessboard.' He is the only man who can play chess and Bach fugues simultaneously."

Stanford, like the sensitive Irishman that he was, resented adverse criticism. I don't think he forgave me for many years for expressing bluntly in the *Sunday Times* my opinion of his second opera, *Savonarola*, when it was given at Hamburg and Covent Garden (once only, under Richter) in 1884. Had he come across the right librettist —for even Julian Sturgis was not at his best in *Much Ado About Nothing*—he might have developed into an operatic composer of the first rank. As it is, his *Shamus O'Brien* is the best comic opera of its class that we have. Stanford's versatility was extraordinary, and, once he had gained his equilibrium after an early predilection for Brahms, there was no school or style, old or new, that he could not easily assimilate and reproduce without plagiarism.

The last time I met Sir Charles Stanford was at a dinner of the Society of English Singers, at which we sat beside each other, two or three weeks before he died in 1924. He could no longer make a speech, but his mind was as alert and his conversation as lively as ever. We chatted

about bygone days, and he confessed that he now thought my feelings towards him and his work had been more friendly than he had supposed. I told him I believed that certain of his Cambridge friends had at one period done both himself and me more harm than good by their *intransigeant* attitude. He shrugged his shoulders and observed, "Well, I suppose they meant well!" On which neutral note we parted with great cordiality—never to meet again. His remains worthily repose among the famous in Westminster Abbey.

My first meeting with Sir Frederick Bridge was at the death-bed of our mutual friend Joseph Maas, the gifted English tenor, in January, 1886. As we left the house on Marlborough Hill, he said, "We have lost in dear old Joe a great artist and one of the loveliest tenors since Giuglini. Joe was a shade throaty, if you like, but what a rich, thrilling quality he had! We shared the same weakness, he and I—an intense love of fishing. Only I go in for fly-fishing and move about; but he, poor fellow, sat all day in the rain in an exposed punt, and so caught his death of cold!" I told Sir Frederick that Maas had once sung a song of mine at the Promenade Concerts. "Well, it must have suited him," said Bridge. "Yes," said I, "but not until I had made any number of alterations." "Just like Joe," he rejoined. "He would never sing a new song till every note of it was to his liking."

Sir Frederick Bridge refers affectionately to Joseph Maas in his autobiography, "A Westminster Pilgrim." The two were choir-boys together at Rochester Cathedral, and he says: "I well remember him when he came, a small boy, to have his voice tested. He possessed an exceedingly beautiful soprano, and speedily was able to sing the solos in the Cathedral. Very often he and I went

to one of the Canon's houses when there was a dinner party, Maas singing to my accompaniment. . . . Maas was devoted to fishing, and helped to stir within me that love for the angler's art which I still indulge." And which he continued to indulge for nearly forty years after Maas was no more.

At the period—say 1876-85—when Edward Lloyd and Joseph Maas were both before the public and in their prime, comparisons between them would have been thought invidious as well as superfluous. Connoisseurs were much more occupied in appraising their quite dissimilar merits than in endeavouring to discover the points wherein one singer excelled the other. Enough that both were magnificent artists, gifted with beautiful tenor voices of a markedly individual quality, and with styles no less peculiarly their own.

Maas was a genuine *tenore robusto*, a shade throaty in the middle register, but with head notes of thrilling power; an ideal singer for the operatic stage, as he proved during his long association with Carl Rosa. Yet when he died (January 16th, 1886) I wrote: "It was as an oratorio and concert singer that Joseph Maas achieved highest and widest renown. It is here that his loss has been most deeply felt." That was because he had been singing less and less in opera as time went on.

Edward Lloyd, on the other hand, was not "built for" the stage, and he knew better than ever to approach it. Not that he shirked operatic solos. No tenor living then or now—including Joseph Maas and Jean de Reszke—could have sung "Lend me your aid" and the "Preislied" quite as he sang them. It was, I suppose, a question of physique, training, disposition.

Lloyd was the great concert artist *par excellence*. In

his own line he was supreme, for there he was the true successor of Sims Reeves, whose powers were beginning to fail when he came to the front. His voice never "broke," and its timbre was of the most exquisite quality. The smoothness of his *legato* was amazing; it was said to compare with that of Giuglini; and those who were fortunate enough to hear him sing Handel's "Love in her eyes" could well believe it. Like the "Deeper and deeper still" of Sims Reeves and "Why do the Nations" or "Ruddier than the Cherry" of Santley, it was absolutely unsurpassable. Such Handelian singing has not been heard since.

When Sir Frederick Bridge was appointed conductor of the Royal Choral Society in 1896, Sir George Grove suggested his restoring Handel's original accompaniments to the *Messiah*—i.e. dispensing with Mozart's reputed additions.* In January, 1899, the idea was carried into effect. The change was not universally approved, yet sufficiently so for Messrs. Novello (who promptly published the revised string parts, prepared by Mr. T. W. Bourne) to bring out a new edition of their octavo vocal score containing the indications of the original instrumentation only. With reference to this and my criticism of a "wrong note" sung in "He was despised" (*Sunday Times*, January 8th, 1899) I received from Sir Frederick the following characteristic letter:

Littlington Tower,
The Cloisters, Westminster Abbey.
*Jan.* 10, 1899.

Dear Klein,—Pray allow me to say I am responsible for the "wrong note" Miss Emily Himing sang at the Albert Hall. The note is as Miss Himing sang it in Handel's MS., although I know

* Mozart's score was lost some years before the parts were printed, and beyond a doubt he was not responsible for many of the alterations and additions that were attributed to him.

it is open to question whether it is a slip of the pen or not. But Miss Himing only did what I asked.

As I am writing, permit me to thank you sincerely for the careful and judicious notice you gave of the *Messiah* performance. It is too soon to decide what ought to be done in every case. We shall repeat the performance on Good Friday, and after that performance I shall be able to decide upon various points in which at present I reserve my judgment. I have given the *Messiah* this way, not for the sake of a sensation, but to try and get a version which does not injure Handel. I hope we may eventually be able to do this, possibly by some such method as you suggest. But that we can continue to use some of the terrible Mozart (?) effects I cannot believe.—Yours sincerely, FREDERICK BRIDGE.

When he resigned his post at the Albert Hall in 1923, Bridge had held it for three years longer than Barnby; and he also beat him easily as a cracker of jokes at rehearsal, though not perhaps as a perpetrator of puns or for his ability as a choral conductor. But Sir Frederick possessed three fine qualities: he was a modest man, a thorough musician, and a clever, indefatigable lecturer. He never pretended to be a great organist in the literal sense, much less a great composer. But he wrote some good music and fulfilled his duties at Westminster quite admirably, especially in connexion with the coronations of King Edward and his present Majesty, King George.

Sir Edward Elgar's rapid rise to fame and the no less speedy recognition by the State of his outstanding gifts are without precedent in our musical history. His genius did not unfold itself all at once. The first work from his pen that drew attention was a short oratorio, *The Light of Life* ("*Lux Christi*"), performed at the Worcester Festival of 1896; I admired it for its promise, whilst perceiving

how much it owed to Wagner. But neither in this, nor in the Saga of *King Olaf* of the same year, nor the *Caractacus* of 1898, did the true Elgar emerge.* That moment arrived in June, 1899, when Richter brought out the magnificent "Enigma" Variations in the presence of a wondering and delighted audience at St. James's Hall. Three months later we were applauding the "Sea Pictures," sung by Miss Clara Butt at the Norwich Festival; and then came the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Birmingham Festival of 1900, Richter again being the conductor. That was an epoch-making event.

Here was a British composer speaking with a new idiom, endowed with poetic imagination, possessing remarkable individuality of feeling and expression and an intensely romantic temperament; who was, moreover, a consummate master of all the forms and technicalities of his art. The verdict of Birmingham speedily became the verdict of the whole country. Germany confirmed it forthwith; America somewhat later, after a shade of hesitancy.

I was in New York when Sir Edward Elgar (knighted in 1904) came over to conduct his second oratorio, *The Apostles*, and was fortunately able to aid there with my pen (as I had done previously at home) in the task of making the new "prophet" known. In a postscript to a letter, dated April 24th, 1906, which he addressed to me from the Cincinnati Country Club, he said, "I do not *write* thanks for your kind articles and good wishes: these I hope to give you in person." Unluckily he found no

* It was quite incorrect to state, as did the article in the old edition of Grove's Dictionary, that Elgar's claim to "a place among the great composers" dates from his *King Olaf*, produced at the North Staffordshire Festival of 1896.

time to do so, either then or subsequently after my return to England.

There is no space to tell in these pages how Elgar went from strength to strength, ever gaining ground—less perhaps in his choral works than in his symphonies and concertos, but always adding solidly to his reputation and popularity. The Order of Merit, which he was the first musician to receive, was conferred upon him by the King in 1911; and it was an honour paid not to the individual alone, but to the Art of Music generally in the person of one of its greatest living exemplars. The rare distinction could not have been more worthily or more fittingly bestowed.

Of this rapid advance, and much more in the same connexion, I was thinking in the Stadium at Wembley, on St. George's Day, 1924, when the King and Queen opened the British Empire Exhibition, and Sir Edward Elgar played his part in that splendid ceremonial. Bare-headed, grey-haired, and with quiet dignity, he mounted his improvised rostrum and conducted a surpliced choir of lusty singers, none too numerous for that vast enclosure, through a dull, ineffective programme, the only telling item in which was his own fine refrain, "Land of Hope and Glory," which anyone but Elgar himself would have taken half as fast again.

By the way, it is not generally known that Clara Butt was responsible for the remoulding of "Land of Hope and Glory" in the form that has made it familiar all over the world. The distinguished contralto herself explained to me how this came about. Sir Edward Elgar remarked one day in the course of conversation that, with the exception of the "Sea Pictures," she did not sing any of his songs. Mrs. Rumford asked why he did not write one expressly

for her—" a song with a good tune to it, like the theme of the trio in his march ' Pomp and Circumstance ' ? "

Elgar thought for a moment, then quietly replied, " Why not a song with that very tune for a chorus ? We only need the words."

There was the idea. The words—strong, simple, boldly rhythmical, like the melody that served for the refrain—were quickly forthcoming from the " Coronation Ode " written by Mr. A. C. Benson, with additional stanzas (set to a new and more ordinary tune) to build up the three verses into a stimulating patriotic song. No need to dilate upon its triumphant success wherever the British flag flies to-day. " Land of Hope and Glory " has probably carried the name of Elgar to regions overseas where otherwise it might never have been known.

When the newly-built Queen's Hall was opened in 1895, the manager, Robert Newman, entrusted the direction of his first series of Promenade Concerts to a comparatively unknown young conductor, named Henry J. Wood, whose experience with the baton had been gained chiefly in provincial opera companies. To Robert Newman the business of running " Promenades " was tolerably familiar; he had learnt it during summer and autumn seasons at Covent Garden, and must have often smiled when a younger generation insisted on dating this form of entertainment and the popularizing of high-class musical programmes no farther back than the experiment at Queen's Hall.

The success of that experiment—including less reliance on the sale of " drinks "—was in a large measure due to the hard work and ability of the alert, precise, black-bearded

Mr. Wood. The favourable opinion of him was increased by the manner in which he conducted Stanford's *Shamus O'Brien* at the Opera Comique Theatre in the following March. In 1897 came the Symphony, the Choral, and the Sunday Concerts at Queen's Hall, with all their demands on a conductor's versatile skill, catholicity of taste, and breadth of sympathy. The young Londoner—he was only twenty-eight then—did not disappoint expectations. His reputation as a *chef-d'orchestre* was quickly made. Fourteen years later he received his knighthood.

If Sir Henry Wood had not been a musician from necessity he would probably have been a painter from choice. The walls of his house near Primrose Hill are covered with his pictures and drawings. Still, thanks to his enormous capacity for work, the musical profession contains no figure that is more constantly in the public eye. He directs many orchestral concerts in the provinces, and he has recently instilled new life and vigour into the Norwich Festival. As a conductor he is rather apt to recall Nikisch; nor is the compliment of the comparison undeserved. His vocal "coaching" is also much in request.

Years ago, when I was at the Guildhall School of Music, I discovered by chance that a baritone pupil of mine was working simultaneously with Henry Wood, who was probably as little aware of the fact as I was. I found it out when the young man brought me a copy of *Elijah* in which his part was simply smothered with blue pencil-marks. I asked him who was responsible for such a generous quantity of indications; he answered frankly, "My accompanist, Mr. Henry Wood." I told him, with equal frankness, that next time he came he was to bring with him a nice clean copy of the

score, and that I would do the marking for him myself.

To Sir Thomas Beecham's labours in connexion with opera reference has already been made. His exceptional qualities as a conductor are not easy to define, though, judged by results, they may fairly be described as brilliant. Beecham handles an orchestra with masterly skill ; he knows exactly what he wants and how to make his men do his will ; he obtains dynamic contrasts and effects that are at times thrilling. What is more, his interpretations (of the old masters especially) are replete with the rarest delicacy and beauty of nuance. It is a thousand pities that he is no longer associated with a permanent orchestra.

There are born conductors, just as there are born singers and instrumentalists. Yet they all have to learn their art and earn their experience ; their methods mostly differ. We might wish that the new virtuoso conductor imitated Richter and strove to carry out the ideas and suggestions of Wagner, just as we might desire that ambitious singers would use their voices in the fashion prescribed by Manuel Garcia. But to expect so much would be unreasonable. The futility of excessive gesture and superfluous vigour in a conductor has been proved over and over again. It often reminds me of what happened to Sullivan at the Leeds Festival of 1883.

It came to Sir Arthur's ears that the chorus were making unfavourable comparisons between his own "lethargic" manner at rehearsal and the extremely energetic beat of Sir Joseph Barnby. He determined to show at the next rehearsal that he could be quite as active as his friend Joseph, and accordingly he "beat time like a

windmill." One reads that "his arms were upraised, thrown round in full swing and vigorously used, while he loudly stamped with his feet, and his eyes sparkled with fun. After the first chorus, there were audible expressions of pleased surprise. 'By gow,' one (Yorkshire) singer was heard to say—'Sullivan *has* improved!'; and never after was a word heard about 'Sullivan's lethargy'!"* But neither was anything heard about an improvement in the singing.

The point is, however, that in England the conductor's art has of late years made a conspicuous advance; that we have British conductors to-day who will compare with any in the world. In this category stand indubitably the two living examples last mentioned above, viz. Sir Henry Wood and Sir Thomas Beecham. Without the splendid work done by both these men, English music would never have attained the exalted position in universal esteem that it does at this moment.

The knights of more recent date, bar two or three, are of what I may term the academic order. Sir Hugh Allen (1920) has to his credit useful labours at Oxford and the Royal College of Music. Sir Landon Ronald (1922), a son of Henry Russell, the veteran singer who composed "Cheer, boys, cheer," owed his first chance to Sir Augustus Harris and Madame Melba. His ability as an accompanist led directly to the development of his talent as a conductor. Since he succeeded Dr. W. H. Cummings in 1910 as Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, he has introduced some reforms that have converted the school into a more efficient institution, whilst maintaining its prosperity.

* "History of the Leeds Musical Festivals," by Fred. R. Spark and Joseph Bennett.

Sir Ivor Atkins (1921), organist of Worcester Cathedral, presents the rare instance of a musician honoured for good work in the provinces ; while yet another occurs in Sir Dan Godfrey (1922), for thirty years the able and hard-working conductor at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens, where he raised the standard of the permanent Municipal Orchestra to a level of excellence unprecedented in the history of our seaside resorts.

Of the two musical knights of 1923, Sir Walford Davies and Sir Richard Terry, the former, apart from his admirable compositions, did splendid work for a quarter of a century at the Temple Church. As first Professor of Music in the University of Wales, at Aberystwyth, he was called upon forthwith to create high traditions, and he has done so. Sir Richard Terry resigned lately from the post of organist of Westminster Cathedral ; but, like another Cranmer, he " kindled a fire " in the hearts of the people—a veritable enthusiasm for the religious and secular music of the great Elizabethan masters, that may be accounted among the inextinguishable art renaissances of our epoch.

Finally, so far as this record can go, there remains to mention Sir Hamilton Harty, the zealous and indefatigable conductor of the Hallé Orchestra at Manchester. To follow men like Richter and Hallé was a genuine test of merit, but one not beyond the powers of this clever Irish musician, who can not only write good music but interpret with signal ability the masterpieces of every school. Knights of this order are welcomed by the whole nation.

# CHAPTER XVII

## ARMAGEDDON AND AFTERMATH

Music in the Twentieth Century—The New Propaganda—Danger to the Young English School—An Impressionistic Invasion—Scriabin's Doubts—Tchaikovsky and Glazounov in London—New British Composers—Their Output from 1903 to 1910—Novelties at the Festivals, the Promenades, etc.—Foundation of the London Symphony Orchestra—An Anonymous Warning in the *Edinburgh Review*—New Operas at Covent Garden and London Opera House—Sir Joseph Beecham provides Russian Opera and Ballet at Drury Lane—Enter the "High-brow"—The Struggle between the Classics and Musical Chaos—Victory for Common Sense—Attitude and Action of the Critics—Genesis of the Press Agent—Finis.

IN this concluding chapter it will be useful to give a brief account of London's musical activities and permutations during the first decade or so of the present century. They deserve much more minute analysis, constituting as they do some of the most curious phenomena in our present interesting period of transition. But that weightier task I must leave to some abler pen; and perhaps, moreover, the moment has not yet arrived for doing complete justice to the era we have just been passing through. Meanwhile, what I am about to say furnishes, as it were, a temporary connecting link.

With the turn of the century the hold of "modernism" on every form of art had already obtained a firm grip in France, Central Europe and Russia; but not as yet in this country. Not being originators in these matters, we were waiting before taking the plunge—waiting to discover which of the various "leads" we would like best to imitate.

We ended by following too many. When we did

make a beginning, we were too precipitate. Our young composers, still in the leading-strings of comparative orthodoxy, had made up their minds to escape ; in other words, they had decided to catch up with the nearest congenial Continental stream long before they had actually completed their normal course of study.

Once they were free to escape, there was no holding them. Within a very short period our concert programmes, our publishers' counters, and even to some extent our attenuated opera bills, were heavily sprinkled with examples of the *nouveau art*, most of them from abroad, a few of them clever native imitations. We were speedily in the thick of a Continental musical invasion compared with which the Wagner craze of the 'seventies was child's play.

For the invaders this time were not foreign conductors and interpreters only, but British propagandists pushing strange alien music, and, sometimes, the alien composers themselves. The wheels of modern art, unlike those of fate, grind quickly; and the cogs of the British machine, being better oiled now, are no longer slow to receive the impetus of a big new movement from abroad. Forty years ago we were not so ready to fall into line, being still under the heel of the foreign musician, who was in the main an orthodox person, not concerning himself with new ideas, except in so far as they could be turned to his own profit. Besides, the whole business of musical enterprise was being carried out then upon different lines.

But there was danger in this increased receptivity of ours—a danger we could not altogether avoid. In the confusion that followed upon the intensive absorption of the new "impressionistic" schools of musical thought, we lost our bearings. For a time we were tossed about at the mercy of every eccentric wave or breeze that approached

these islands. Personally, I was watching the process, partly from the other side of the Atlantic, partly at close quarters during my yearly visits to London, and it created in me the same sort of concern as would the outbreak of an epidemic. Where was the frenzy going to stop ?

In New York I had met Scriabin fresh from his Paris successes. He played one afternoon before an admiring crowd at the Savoy Hotel (it was, I think, in 1908), and he admitted that so far his ultra-modern works had not made much headway in England. "But," he added, "I have hopes. I see that Debussy has just made his début at Queen's Hall and conducted some of his pieces. Where he leads I shall be able sooner or later to follow."

I could not ruffle his complacent assurance ; nor did I wish to, for he was a charming man, and I liked some of his music, including, of course, the early sonatas and the study for left hand only, which he played that afternoon with amazing deftness. Moreover, his prophecy about England turned out correct, at any rate for a time.

Scriabin was, by the way, interested to learn that I had met both Tchaikovsky and Glazounov when they were in London, the former in 1893, the latter four years later. He was also amused when I told him that both had confessed that they were as nervous as schoolgirls on their first appearance at the Philharmonic, because they positively feared that their symphonies might be thought too "advanced" for an old-fashioned, classic-loving audience.

Tchaikovsky, alas, never lived to witness the furore created in England, as everywhere else, by the "Pathétique." But during this ultimate visit he conducted a triumphant performance of his symphony in F minor on the same night that Saint-Saëns played his own piano concerto in G minor. I recalled that memorable con-

junction to Glazounov, on the day after he made his début at Queen's Hall, as I walked down Regent Street with him to show him where he could buy some good cigars. "Yesterday," he said, "I could smoke nothing but cigarettes. I felt too nervous and anxious. To-day, after those endless recalls, I feel I can tackle a good Havana."

Scriabin smiled as I told him all this. He naturally regarded these symphonies, and most others of the same date, as already *vieux jeu!* Then the smile disappeared, and he remarked seriously, "Tchaikovsky was a great man. Would that Russia had more musicians like him to-day!"

Exactly when the thin end of the British wedge was inserted no one can say. But indications of a new growth were budding when I came over in 1903, even at a moment when the works of Wagner and Strauss were everywhere in the ascendant. At Covent Garden in that year Richter conducted his usual cycles of *The Ring* before overflowing audiences; yet a new opera by an Englishwoman—Dame Ethel Smyth's *Der Wald*, already in the repertory—was thought good enough for repetition. At St. James's Hall the feature was a "Richard Strauss Festival," with the composer, assisted by Mengelberg, conducting the whole of his symphonic poems. In June of the same summer I remember a grandiose, though by no means perfect, performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, for the first time in London, in the Westminster Cathedral, under Elgar's own guidance.

Then at the Promenades in the autumn came a remarkable sequence of British novelties, viz. a symphony (A minor, Op. 22) by Cyril Scott; a piano concerto (F minor, Op. 36) by Josef Holbrooke; a symphonic

poem "The Lament of Tasso," by York Bowen; a piano concerto (in D) by Harry Farjeon; a symphonic poem "Unto the everlasting" by Rutland Boughton (Op. 9); and another called "Pompilia," by Edgar L. Bainton. Elsewhere one heard of an MS. string quartet by Arnold Bax and a string quintet in C minor by H. Balfour Gardiner. Altogether a very significant preliminary instalment from the Young English School.

Not until 1904, however, did cumulative evidence of the new crusade become indubitably manifest. That was the first year of the Patron's Fund for performing new orchestral works, established by Mr. (now Sir) S. Ernest Palmer. It was started at St. James's Hall, and brought into notice novelties by York Bowen, Frank Bridge, W. Y. Hurlstone, Paul Corder, and Gustav Holst. Three at least of these struck a fresh note—a note that was heard again at the succeeding Leeds Festival, in a poem for orchestra and chorus by Josef Holbrooke and in Walford Davies's cantata *Everyman*.

That year, too, Sir Henry Wood, who had been conducting in New York, had the courage, after introducing Debussy's "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," to bring forward more of the new idiom in the shape of an orchestral rhapsody by Cyril Scott. People began to open their eyes as well as their ears; here was unfamiliar stuff with a vengeance! Like some strange liqueur, it had an odd bouquet which the palate as yet failed to identify, and on the whole the *cognoscenti* did not dislike it; but, truly, it was mere baby's drink in comparison with what was to come.

During the autumn there was an Elgar Festival, attended by the King and Queen, at which *Gerontius* and the new oratorio *The Apostles* were performed; while yet another event which marked this "red-letter" year

was the formation of the London Symphony Orchestra, the outcome of the secession of about half of the Queen's Hall Orchestra. The new body, however, was nothing if not discreet; it pinned its faith to old music and old conductors. It opened (Queen's Hall, June 9th, 1904) with Hans Richter at the helm; Nikisch directed the second concert, Steinbach the third, Villiers Stanford the fourth, Colonne the fifth, Elgar the sixth, and Henschel the seventh. So eclectic a policy naturally resulted in a brilliant inaugural season.

The success in 1905 of a fine "Welsh" rhapsody by Edward German brought no particular comfort to the ardent modernist. On the other hand, when Vaughan Williams in 1906 came into the limelight with his "Norfolk" rhapsody, the spirit of innovation here displayed created much satisfaction. Granville Bantock, in his lovely "Sappho" songs, his "Omar Khayyám," and his fine orchestral poem, "Lalla Rookh," and Holbrooke in his choral setting of Poe's "Bells," went even farther. At the Birmingham Festival that year Sir Edward Elgar produced his third important choral work, *The Kingdom*. But evidently the true bent of his genius lay in another direction. The symphonies, the overtures, and the concertos for violin and violoncello were still to come.

In 1907-8 there emerged yet another potent disciple of the new thought, namely Frederick Delius. His piano concerto, his tone poem "Paris," his English rhapsody "Brigg Fair," and his symphonic poem "Life's Dance," aroused both admiration and discussion. Two of these "queer" novelties, as someone called them, were given under Thomas Beecham, who was also responsible for the production at Covent Garden in 1910 of Delius's

clever but tedious opera *The Village Romeo and Juliet*. By degrees there arose a clash of opinions that indicated a very confused state of thought. Lovers of the beautiful in music began to grow seriously concerned.

A helpful warning note was sounded in the *Edinburgh Review* in the latter part of 1906. Generally supposed to have been written by Sir (then Mr.) Henry Hadow, the article was entitled "Some Tendencies in Modern Music," and it aroused wide comment as "an able and successful attempt to formulate some definite critical standard by which, in the present time of bewilderment and embarrassment, we may hope to steady our judgment." *

The writer compared various periods, various masters, various schools; he measured genius against charlatanism; he declared that Wagner, although "a supreme artist in his own craft," had been "a dangerous model in all forms other than dramatic." Then, after weighing the respective merits of the best living English composers, he pointed out the danger of merely imitating the foreign school:

> We have our own language to speak, we have our own message to deliver, we have our own ideals to maintain; our leaders have arisen to point the road, and it is to them that the younger men will most profitably look for direction and guidance. Every good musician has learnt something from foreign schools; not one has ever been absorbed by them.

This eloquent reproof did not pass unheeded at the time. Yet, during the years that preceded the war, one noted a steady growth of "modernistic" symptoms in the compositions of the younger men. Slowly but surely

* *Musical Times*, vol. xlviii., p. 102.

they were yielding to the influence of new ideas and new idioms.

For the first time, at the Proms in 1909, were heard the scores of Max Reger—his "Variations and Fugue on a Merry Theme" and his "Prologue to a Tragedy"—in addition to the "Rapsodie Espagnole" of Ravel. As a set-off to these the Hereford Festival gave Walford Davies's cantata *Noble Numbers;* while Birmingham thus early afforded prominence to the talent of Rutland Boughton ("Midnight"), a full six years before his opera, *The Immortal Hour*, was produced at Bournemouth.

In 1910 Scriabin's "Poème de l'Extase" was played at Queen's Hall under Kussevitzky, anticipating by three years the "Poème de Feu" under Sir Henry Wood; while Rachmaninov's symphony was introduced by Nikisch at the Philharmonic. That year gave us Vaughan Williams's "Sea Symphony" at Leeds, Dr. Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* at Covent Garden, and Clutsam's opera *A Summer Night* during the Beecham season at His Majesty's; but Richard Strauss secured the lion's share of attention with no fewer than three of his newest operas—*Elektra*, *Feuersnot*, and *Salome*.

The new London Opera House in Kingsway was opened by Oscar Hammerstein in the following year. Utterly ignorant concerning operatic conditions in England, the American impresario wasted both time and capital over a venture that was destined from the outset to fail. Inaugurated on November 13th, 1911, with a French opera by Nouguès, founded on the novel "Quo Vadis?" the season closed in the succeeding June with the production of Holbrooke's opera *The Children of Don*, composed to a libretto by Lord Howard de Walden and conducted by Arthur Nikisch. The other novelties comprised three

operas by Massenet, viz. *Hérodiade*, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, and *Don Quichotte*.

Meantime, the appetite for the new, the extravagant and the sensational was quickly growing by what it fed upon. In 1912 works by Schönberg, Ravel and Korngold were heard at the Promenades. The taste for Slavonic music spread by leaps and bounds.

In 1913 Sir Joseph Beecham took Drury Lane Theatre and initiated London into the delights of the Russian Ballet with Pavlova and Nijinsky; also giving Moussorgsky's opera *Boris Godounov* with the incomparable Chaliapin. Under the same auspices we had Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* at Covent Garden and his *Ariadne auf Naxos* at His Majesty's. Maurice Ravel made his début here in midseason. No wonder Camille Saint-Saëns was thought old-fashioned in his oratorio, *The Promised Land*, which he conducted at the Gloucester Festival. The work was, however, well received later on both in London and Paris.

For its season of 1913–14 the Philharmonic Society engaged the talented Safonov as conductor and went in boldly for "all-Russian programmes." Rimsky-Korsakov's "Easter" overture was hailed as a masterpiece; so was Schönberg's amazing sextet, Op. 4, performed at Bechstein Hall with the composer present. Two English conductors modestly made their débuts—Albert Coates at Covent Garden, Eugène Goossens as "second in command" to Sir Thomas Beecham. Subsequently, when the conductorship of the Manchester Hallé Concerts fell vacant, we were to discover what a sound and sensible instrumental leader we possessed in Hamilton Harty; while later still Birmingham was to bring into higher prominence the talented Adrian Boult.

But in 1914 the foreign element still prevailed. The inevitable Richard Strauss was at Queen's Hall in June; and in the same month came the biggest Russian season of the whole series at Drury Lane, headed by Stravinsky's ballet *Le Rossignol* (for the first time on any stage), and with no fewer than seven other ballets to follow, viz. *Prince Igor* (Borodin), *Daphnis et Chloë* (Ravel), *Les Papillons* (Schumann), *Le Coq d'Or* and *Nuit de Mai* (Rimsky-Korsakov), *Midas* (Steinberg), and *Légende de Joseph* (Strauss). Concurrently we heard Chaliapin in *Boris*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and *Khovantchina*; also—but why in this *galère?*—Holbrooke's opera *Dylan*. But the cost of the season was colossal. The Beechams, *père et fils*, lost thousands over it.

And then came the Great War.

Four years of an influence more demoralizing, more deadening to the artistic sense, than any that we have experienced! For during that catastrophic period Music, in common with the Drama of the metropolis, went through many phases, but few, if any, of healthy or fruitful development. The closing down of Covent Garden, the partial paralysis of opera and concert work, together with the disappearance of the Teutonic element from the scenes that it had so long monopolized, were the more conspicuous among the many symptoms of partial dislocation.

Of even graver consequence was the unobstructed progress of the modern craze for the bizarre and strange and incomprehensible. The "high-brow" suddenly came to the front, yearning, as it seemed, only for those things which transgressed every accepted law of art, which placed

an entirely novel construction upon the meaning of the word beautiful. An influence, pernicious as it was perverse, began slowly but surely to make itself apparent in the ideas of our younger school of composers, and even threatened simultaneously to undermine the principles of artistic taste in our more cultured musical public.

During the first two years of the war period there was an amount of feverish activity in all departments (save that of the lyric stage) which at the time seemed very difficult to account for. In reality, it was the slow gathering of volcanic forces which were to culminate, in another few years and amidst a mighty struggle, in the most beneficial eruption that musical art in this country has yet known or probably ever will know.

The extraordinary liveliness of 1915 proved, if it proved anything, that our own young men did not propose to be "out of the running." In the month of May there was a "Festival of British Music" at Queen's Hall, conducted by Thomas Beecham and the talented Pole, Emil Mlynarski. In addition to works by Elgar and Stanford, the scheme included compositions, many of them new, by Frederic Austin, Granville Bantock, Arnold Bax, Herbert Bedford, Frederick Delius, Percy Grainger, Hamilton Harty, Josef Holbrooke, J. B. McEwen, Norman O'Neill, Percy Pitt, Cyril Scott, Ethel Smyth, William Wallace, and Vaughan Williams.

Later in the same season Isidore de Lara gave three British orchestral concerts, conducted by Sir Henry Wood, in course of which was heard a symphonic poem by Eugène Goossens, besides pieces by Frank Bridge, B. J. Dale, J. Holbrooke, and others. But whilst the outlook for the increased appreciation of native music was growing wider and clearer, one could not yet determine its actual

" tendency." Was it to be towards the heights, or towards an abyss of ugliness and cacophony ?

Stravinsky, thanks to the piquant cleverness and originality of his ballet *Petrouchka*, and the many striking details in his opera-ballet *Le Rossignol*, gained hundreds of adherents in London; then lost them again with that long, pretentious, daring monstrosity, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which excited wonder and ridicule, but never, surely, genuine admiration, either in the concert-room or the theatre. Stravinsky, however, became for a while a name to conjure with; and so, in a milder degree, did those of all the Russian " moderns " and the ingenious but discordant French group who called themselves the " Six."

We were made to sup full on musical (!) horrors. Even the classics had to go by the board to make room for these keyless, tuneless, formless agglomerations of chaotic sounds, these sterile wastes of meaningless and unlovely instrumentation, as garish in colour and unsymmetrical in shape as they were barren of poetic imagery or coherent thought. New idioms, indeed! Submerged beneath a sea of harsh dissonances, unrelated chords, and ear-torturing harmonies, they failed to appeal to the true musician or to satisfy aught beyond the cravings of a perverted ear.

But finally the struggle ceased and the foreign crater burst.

Like most volcanic eruptions, it was very dangerous and disagreeable while it lasted; but this one did not last long. It reached its climax during the closing season of the war period. Then began a slow realization of the folly of it all—the stupidity of imagining that this kind of stuff could take the place of real music.

By degrees works of a purer fibre, revealing a saner

and cleaner mentality, resumed their proper place in concert schemes, from which, happily, examples of first-class native music had never been wholly ousted. The classics likewise came into their own once more. And so, by a gradual process of renewal and renovation, after an upheaval which threatened at one time to bring about permanent disaster, music in this country found and still finds itself restored to conditions under which it can continue to develop and make solid progress towards the fulfilment of its high destiny.

I am grateful, for my part, for two or three things in which an advance may fairly be claimed. The first of these forward movements has been in the intellectual calibre and musical culture of concert audiences all over the country. To those who have watched it carefully this growth has been quite astonishing; and it has pervaded every class of society. The second, begun by the Competition Festivals at Blackpool in the opening year of the century, is being completed by another unprecedented development—that of the wireless Radio or Broadcasting system which, as these words are written, is barely three years old. Between them they have carried the higher types of music for the first time literally into the very homes of the people. In the same category may be placed the remarkable improvements in the product of the Gramophone, alike as to mechanism and choice of musical material.

Yet another advance may be noted in the quality of musical criticism. I make no apology for touching upon a subject which some might consider a delicate one for an old critic to handle. On the contrary, I rejoice if, after fifty years of journalistic labour, I can draw comparisons favourable to the active writers of to-day.

I prefer, then, the contemporary manner of appraising new ideas and dealing with new works; one scents less readily the trail of prejudice, less distrust of the strange or unfamiliar. Again, in estimating the achievements of modern technique, criticism has kept pace with the developments in the technique itself, whether in regard to the orchestra, to pianoforte playing, or to chamber music. In so far as singing embodies the art of interpretation, it also receives more meticulous consideration now than it used to.

Take them for all in all, our British twentieth century critics are a clear-headed, logical set of thinkers. They possess a strong foundation of common sense, and I consider it was largely due to that common sense that the main body of the musical community in this country kept its head so well during the dangerous crisis above described. A few writers there were who went astray—attracted by will-o'-the-wisps that should have been powerless to lure them from the right path. On the whole, however, the good influence of the Press for the artistic guidance of the people has never been more triumphantly asserted.

The art of the theatre and the welfare of the theatre-going public are both well served by the present generation of dramatic critics. I may not always agree with their opinions, but I believe them to be honest and unbiased. I enjoy, as a rule, their terse English, their decided views, their creditable endeavours to maintain a lofty tone and recognize true merit.

It would seem fitting that this long retrospect should end upon the note of criticism—a note that has furnished the "tonic," musically speaking, of my busy career ever since it was first hummed in my ears by Manuel Garcia and Bizet Michau. Well, my final chord—is it an un-

resolved dissonance?—shall be a warning to my patient readers to beware of that subtle modern product, the press-agent. They must take care to distinguish between indulgent criticism and the doses of fulsome flattery, the tiresome details of domestic gossip, that are too readily admitted to the editorial columns of to-day. The professional purveyor of so-called "information" is, of course, employed by the management or by the artist, who thereby obtain publicity and sometimes attribute to a newspaper outbursts of admiration that are wholly opposed to the views of the recognized critic.

How is the innocent person who buys that paper to know who is responsible for the sugary superlatives that appear in it? For the greater part they are intended to mislead, and they do so. But it does not tend to the welfare of the arts, or to the unimpeded fostering of genuine vocal and dramatic talent, that any system of purchasable publicity should continue to flourish save in the form of regular advertisement.

We are, I fully believe, on the eve of developments more far-reaching than any that I have witnessed; and that is saying much. Consequently, now, more than ever, it is essential for all true lovers of the fine arts to have their wits about them; to be able to differentiate between the false and the real—between genius and *charlatanerie*, as Sir Henry Hadow termed it—between pure beauty and artificial make-believe. Let them think twice before setting their estimate upon the works and the performers that challenge judgment in the theatre, the opera-house, and the concert-room. If they will do that, we need have no fear. The British people cannot be deceived for long, and my faith in their good sense and their determination to have as well as to do the right thing is unbounded.

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